• Rust Belt vs. New South • Backyards • A New Yorker from Tennessee • Brian and the Nightmares •

NOW AND THEN

The Appalachian Magazine

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services/Institute for Appalachian Affairs
East Tennessee State University

Charleston, W.Va., at night. Photo by David E. Fattaleh. Courtesy of the West Virginia Department of Commerce.

URBAN APPALACHIA

Down Home and Upscale
Bluegrass Music

Bury Me Under a Sidewalk
The Urban Appalachian Way of Death

Mountain Highs
The Tallest Buildings in Appalachia

STORIES and ESSAYS
Pinckney Benedict, John Bowers
Robert Morgan

REVIEWS
Hillbilly Vampire, Heathen Valley
City Fiction for Appalachian Children

$3.50

Armistice Day parade led by Civil War and Spanish-American war veterans in downtown Asheville, N.C., 1923. Courtesy of the Southern Highlands Research Center.

"After World War I the way of life in the Kentucky Hills quickly changed. . . In boom times thousands of men and women traveled over the new roads to the industrial centers; laid off in slack times, these homesick people came back to their valleys with new ideas of how to live."

—Leonard W. Roberts

South from Hell-fer-Sartin, 1955

Vol. 7

~~Volume 8~~, Number 2
Summer 1990

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Submissions of poetry, fiction, articles, personal essays, graphics and photographs concerned with Appalachian life past and present are welcomed if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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"I like to live close to a city. A city is, or was, supposed to be man's greatest achievement. . . although in some ways Detroit and other places may not seem too civilized."

—Harriette Arnow (from an interview with Danny Miller in ***Melus****, 1982)*

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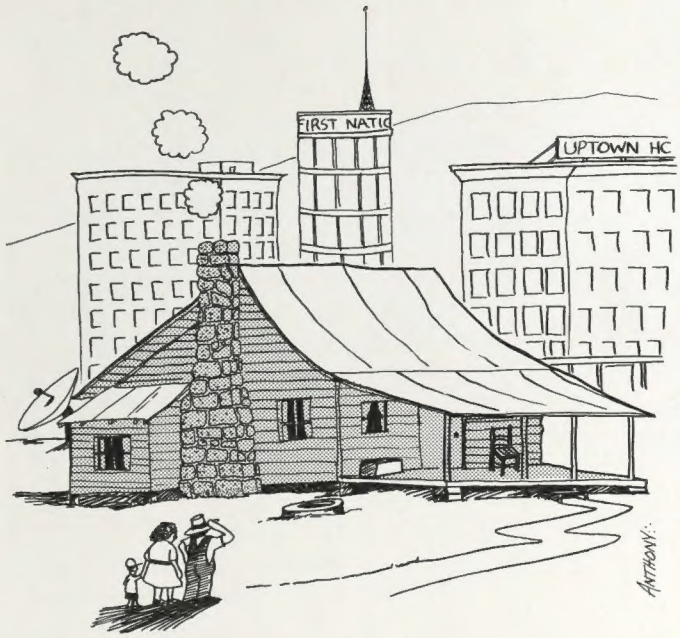

"YEP... I THINK ITS TIME WE REFER TO THE OL' PLACE AS A CONDO"

Not an Oxymoron

Not many people either inside or outside Appalachia seem comfortable considering the words urban and Appalachia in the same breath. Some activists and scholars around Cincinnati are the exception. In fact, they could serve as role models.

It was back in the early 1970s that a group including Michael Maloney, Ernie Mynatt and Stuart Faber began thinking about and working with Appalachian migrant communities around Cincinnati. Their work flourished, and today there is much to show for it. One of the area's important organizations, the Urban Appalachian Council, began in 1974 with the motto "serving the invisible minority." They set up educational programs for adults and children, employment training and Appalachian festivals. With a staff of 24 and funding from government and foundations, the Council has become a well-established hub of activity and thought about regional identity and pride.

I asked Maureen Sullivan, who has been the executive director of the Urban Appalachian Council for eight years, why Cincinnati has managed to have a stronger organization and focus on its Appalachian residents than any other city—inside or outside of the region. She pointed out the geographic proximity—Cincinnati is on the edge of Appalachia, an easy drive from Eastern Kentucky. And, she said, it's generally agreed that at least one quarter of the population of Cincinnati can trace an Appalachian heritage. She believes "there is a continuation of Appalachian culture and community" even among the many natives of Cincinnati whose parents or grandparents were the migrants. But the Appalachian organizations that foster the consciousness and pride in Appalachian identity took root only with the help of early funding and continued nurturing by groups such as the Appalachian Fund, Sullivan believes. A strong cultural identity takes care and feeding.

Two of the scholars involved with Cincinnati's Appalachian community, Phillip Obermiller and Danny Miller, have contributed thoughtful articles for this issue. Obermiller's investigation of the funeral customs of Appalachian migrants, "Bury Me Under a Sidewalk," reveals much about Appalachian identity (page 28), and Miller's survey of urban Appalachian literature, "Country Comes to Town," traces the history of fictional accounts of migration (page 35).

+ + +

When we decided to focus on urban Appalachia in *Now and Then*, it wasn't just the migrants to cities outside the region that we wanted to consider. We planned to think about the cities of central Appalachia, including Charleston, W.Va., Knoxville, Chattanooga, the Tri-Cities of Tennessee, and Asheville, N.C.

We asked writers from those cities for their thoughts. Drema Redd, an English teacher who was born and raised in Charleston, W.Va., told me she did not see how her childhood was different than it would have been in any other city in the U.S. (except she guessed there were more trees and hills where she was than in most urban areas). Her experience, she felt, was more influenced by class than cultural background.

Redd's uncertainty about how her background might be classified as specifically Appalachian was shared by others. Even though 55 percent of Appalachia's population lives in metropolitan areas, little regional literature—non-fiction or fiction—focuses on life in the cities of the mountains.

So, we are exploring some new territory in this issue. Perhaps whatever it is that is unique about being an urban Appalachian will begin to emerge from the work within our pages.

We have compiled an interesting selection: A Johnson City native who has lived in New York City for 25 years, John Bowers, contributed his memoir, "A New Yorker Who Never Left Johnson City, Tenn." (page 6). Drema Redd tells something of her history in "Turning Point," a story about her primary school being torn down to make way for an interstate highway (page 16). One of our favorite essayists, Amy Tipton Gray, and East Tennessee State University archivist Norma Myers Thomas had a discussion of their schooling in, "The Dancing Bear Can Waltz, but She Can't Do the Lambada" (page 18). In matters of class consciousness, their experience in Johnson City was startlingly similar to Drema Redd's in Charleston, W.Va.

We are also pleased to to have stories by West Virginian Pinckney Benedict and transplanted North Carolinian Robert Morgan.

The writing and photos we have gathered, we believe, show a cultural and economic diversity that is rarely identified as Appalachian. But maybe regional identity can be enlarged to incorporate the urban experience in places besides Cincinnati. It will make for a richer, more textured meaning of the word Appalachian in a region that is, after all, rich and textured.

—Pat Arnow, Editor

Cartoons in this issue by Tony Feathers. Feathers teaches art in Greene County, Tenn.

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

More Than a Poor Country Cousin

Several years ago Tom T. Hall wrote a song, "Country Is," which included the line "country is living in the city." After reading several histories of urban development in Appalachia and reviewing the poems, interviews, essays and photographs included in this edition of *Now and Then,* I think I have a better understanding of what Tom T. Hall was getting at. "Country" isn't just a geographical *place:* it's a complex set of beliefs, values and attitudes which inform the lifestyles and worldviews of people who think of themselves as "country," sometimes even after generations of displacement and transplantation.

These days country music isn't necessarily for people who live in rural areas and farm for a living. There are fewer and fewer of those people in the United States anyway. In 1910, 35 percent of America's population was actively engaged in farming and ranching; by 1990, our active agricultural workforce had dropped to under three percent and will, in all probability, continue to decrease as we enter the next century.

The shift from a rural-agrarian to an urban-industrial lifestyle has been occurring throughout the United States, including the upland South, for over a hundred years. Here in Appalachia, the development of urban-based commerce and industry has never kept pace with the region's population growth. Disparity between population and economic growth has contributed to massive Appalachian migration to the industrial cities of the Midwest and to the continued depression of income and revenue levels here at home.

Will Appalachia ever catch up? Economically speaking, the picture is not entirely bleak. Southern Appalachia is slowly but surely attaining economic parity with the country as a whole. The completion of the interstate highway system and the Appalachian Development Corridor have brought increased prosperity to valley towns and cities, some of which, like Asheville, N.C., and Johnson City, Tenn., have ranked high in recent quality-of-life surveys.

Urban Appalachia may well be one of America's future growth centers, but only if planners and developers are capable of looking beyond short-term gains and are willing to make long-term investments in health care, education, human services and environmental protection. Low wages and low taxes may have sufficed to attract industry to the upland South in earlier times, but they are no longer sufficient to sustain the multi-faceted growth that will make urban Appalachia more than a poor country cousin of the nation as a whole.

There are great opportunities as well as great challenges here, and we will be dealing with some of these questions in our upcoming issue on Activism in Appalachia. In the meantime, I hope that you enjoy this issue of *Now and Then.* You can support our work by becoming a Friend of CASS and subscribing to this magazine. Help us keep growing.

—Richard Blaustein, Director

Carroll Reece Museum

Appalachia and Beyond

In its early days, the East Tennessee State Teacher's College museum collection in the library consisted mostly of artifacts that documented the settlement of Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. When the museum relocated to its own building and was dedicated as the Carroll Reece Museum in 1965, it acquired the College's permanent collection, which included six paintings from exhibits at the school's Slocumb Gallery. With this acquisition the museum began to move far beyond its origins as a repository of regional artifacts. The broadened scope of collecting was further enhanced in 1966 with the formation of the Friends of the Reece Museum (FORM). FORM complemented the museum's collection through the acquisition of paintings, drawing, sculpture, original prints and crafts from the national and international art markets. Added to the museum permanent collection were works by Mary Cassatt, James McNeill Whistler, Pablo Picasso, Paul Gauguin, Salvador Dali, Auguste Renoir and others who evoke instant recognition with most museum patrons. Also, works have been added to the museum collection that were created by contemporary artists, works that show the limitlessness of creative expression. These include sculpture by Karel Appel, whose work can be found in numerous museums and private collections around the country, clayworks by internationally-known potter, author and educator Charles Counts and prints by renowned artists Leonard Baskin and Alexander Calder.

In addition to the museum's growing collection, the museum has an exhibition program that provides an opportunity to view works by local, regional, national and sometimes international artists. In recent years the museum has hosted exhibits by well-known area photographers Ed Schell and Kenneth Murray, nationally-known potter Jerry Chappelle and exhibits representing the cultures of Soviet Georgia, Ronneby, Sweden and Guaranda, Ecuador.

Many of the exhibits shown at the museum are curated by museum personnel, while others are associated with traveling exhibit programs. A collection of contemporary jewelry created by American, Asian and European artists was shown at the American Museum of Crafts in New York after its showing at the Reece. Associated with the exhibits program are lectures, classes, workshops and lunchtime concerts that provide the visitor with a view of the arts of Appalachia and beyond.

—Blair H. White, Curator

The Growth of the Tri-Cities

In Northeastern Tennessee, the Tri-Cities of Johnson City and Kingsport, Tenn., and Bristol, Tenn./Va., is part of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with a population of approximately 443,000, and a rank of 80 among 111 MSAs in the U.S.

All three cities began as railroad centers. Incorporated in 1869, Johnson City was a rail stop known as Johnson's Depot, and consequently became a center for the distribution of goods by rail. Many small businesses grew up in Johnson City in the late 19th century, and in 1911 the state legislature chose the city as the site of one of four normal schools for teacher training. East Tennessee State University, the descendent of that school, is now the city's largest employer, an integral part of the area's economic and community life. Kingsport, too, began as a rail town, essentially founded as the result of the coming of the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway in the early 20th century. Subsequent planning and development by John B. Dennis and J. Fred Johnson brought industry—the giant Tennessee Eastman plant in particular—to the city.

The origins of Bristol go back to the 1749 surveying of a tract of land known as Sapling Grove. Incorporated much later, in 1856, Bristol, too, grew as a result of rail expansion into Appalachia. The coming of the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad in the late 1850s encouraged rapid growth in Bristol.

Especially valuable resources for tracking the urbanization of the Tri-Cities are the archives' photographic resources. The Burr Harrison Photographs feature many pictures taken by one of Johnson City's earliest photographers. The collection, covering 1920-50, includes black and white prints and negatives of early industry, churches, hotels and downtown scenes.

The Clifford Maxwell Photographs (1940-86) pick up where the Harrison photos end. More than 4,000 black and white negatives cover numerous aspects of community life in Johnson City. Included, for instance, are negatives of the *Johnson City Comet* newsroom, the Johnson City Steam Laundry, Jobe's Opera House, Pet Dairy, Montrose Court Apartments and Mayne Williams Library. The Maxwell Collection also includes negatives of Jonesborough, Milligan College and Kingsport.

The James Garvin Ellis Negatives (1959-60) also provide photographic documentation on Johnson City. Ellis took these photographs as *Johnson City Press-Chronicle* photographer.

Bristol, Tenn./Va. receives photographic treatment in the Kelly-Green Company Collection, which contains black and white photographs of schools, churches, businesses and street scenes from 1905 to 1940.

Written documentation on Johnson City includes three collections: City of Johnson City Records, Mickey Jilton Collection and the *Johnson City Press* news clippings. The city records contain judges' dockets, ordinance books, tax books and assessors' rolls. These records are most valuable in documenting the administrative and judicial history of Johnson City from 1890 to 1973. The Mickey Jilton Collection contains engineering survey books which document the paving of roads and the building of the sewer and water systems in Johnson City from 1907 to 1926.

Two other manuscript collections shed light on the early history of Kingsport and Johnson City. The Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway Records contain information on the development of Kingsport and Johnson City, while the East Tennessee Light and Power Records have documents on the electric power companies in Johnson City and Bristol, from 1900 to 1924.

Those interested in urban development in the Tri-Cities area also could profit from use of the archives' vertical file materials. For Johnson City, Bristol and Kingsport, the archives has information on city planning, commerce, industry, education and religion. For Johnson City the archives has many annual reports for the years 1909 to 1989.

For more information on the holdings of the Archives of Appalachia, please write in care of the Sherrod Library, East Tennessee State University, Box 22450A, or call 615-929-4338.

*—**Norma M. Thomas**, Head, Archives and Special Collections*
*—**Marie Tedesco**, Public Services Archivist*

Downtown Johnson City, Tenn., before 1890. Burr Harrison Collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.

Mountain Highs

Some of the Tallest Buildings in Appalachia

NOW AND THEN

Great issues coming up!

Fall 1990
Activism in Appalachia
The people who change--or try to maintain--the face of Appalachia: missionaries, philanthropists, corporations, government.

Spring 1991
Tourism in Appalachia
Scourge or salvation?
A look at the trendy, the tacky and the tourist traps in the region and what they mean to Appalachia's future.

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higher than 300 feet. The tallest is the South Trust Tower, a 34-story, 454-foot structure completed in 1986.

co-owner, Huey Perry, who wrote the book on which the 1989 movie *Blaze* is based. *Blaze*, the story of stripper Blaze

in Eastern Kentucky, the Ashland Oil Tower, a modern 13-story structure.

In East Tennessee, Knoxville's skyline is the tallest with the 27-story Plaza Tower and the 24-story Riverview Tower next door. The Plaza Tower was erected in 1979 as the United American Bank Building by financier Jake Butcher. Riverview Tower was put up by Butcher's brother, C.H., in 1983. But soon after, the brothers were caught defrauding banks they controlled out of at least $20 million. A Knoxville city official commented, "We've got monuments to the Butcher brothers, but they don't get to enjoy them because they're away in prison." Jake and C.H. Butcher are incarcerated for 20-year terms each.

Pittsburgh's skyline. The USX Tower, Appalachia's tallest building, is at the left. Courtesy of Greater Pittsburgh Convention and Visitors Bureau. Photo by Andrew Wagner.

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Downtown Johnson City, Tenn., before 1890. Burr Harrison Collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.

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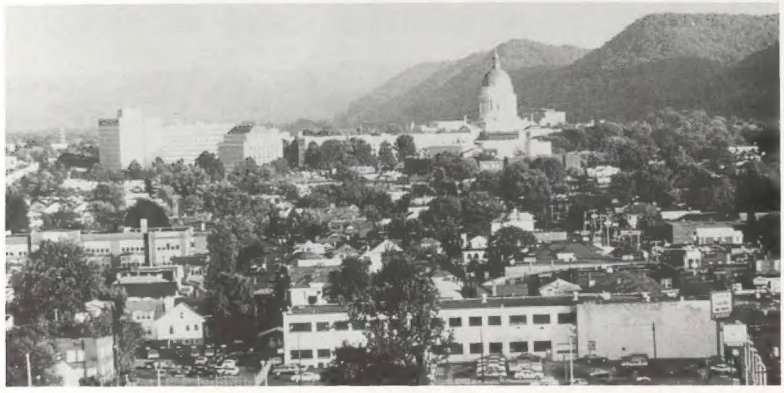
Mountain Highs

Some of the Tallest Buildings in Appalachia



Charleston, the capital of West Virginia. The domed capitol is West Virginia's tallest structure. Photo by Ken Sherman.

Eastern Kentucky's tallest building, the Ashland Oil Tower. Courtesy of Ashland Oil, Inc.

Not surprisingly, the tallest buildings in the region (using the Appalachian Regional Commission's definition, which includes all of West Virginia and the highland areas of 12 other states) are in Pittsburgh. The USX Tower, a 64-story, 841-foot building, dominates the city's "Golden Triangle," where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers meet, marking the beginning of the Ohio River. More than 20 other Pittsburgh buildings top the 300-foot mark. No city in the rest of Appalachia can boast a skyline that comes close. Birmingham, Ala., at the Southern end of the region has four buildings higher than 300 feet. The tallest is the South Trust Tower, a 34-story, 454-foot structure completed in 1986.

The skylines of Central Appalachia aren't as grand. The tallest structure in all of West Virginia is the state capitol building, a 275-foot structure topped with a gold dome.

One of the more interesting tall buildings in the Mountain State is Huntington's highest, the 15-story, 177-foot West Virginia Building which was built in 1925. It is not its height or architectural features that make this office building interesting, however. It is the co-owner, Huey Perry, who wrote the book on which the 1989 movie *Blaze* is based. *Blaze*, the story of stripper Blaze Starr, who was from West Virginia, and Louisiana governor Earl Long starred Paul Newman and Lolita Davidovich. He is also author of *They'll Cut Off Your Project*, a chronicle of a 1960s poverty program in Perry County.

Across the river from Huntington, in Ashland, Ky., stands the tallest building in Eastern Kentucky, the Ashland Oil Tower, a modern 13-story structure.

In East Tennessee, Knoxville's skyline is the tallest with the 27-story Plaza Tower and the 24-story Riverview Tower next door. The Plaza Tower was erected in 1979 as the United American Bank Building by financier Jake Butcher. Riverview Tower was put up by Butcher's brother, C.H., in 1983. But soon after, the brothers were caught defrauding banks they controlled out of at least $20 million. A Knoxville city official commented, "We've got monuments to the Butcher brothers, but they don't get to enjoy them because they're away in prison." Jake and C.H. Butcher are incarcerated for 20-year terms each.

Pittsburgh's skyline. The USX Tower, Appalachia's tallest building, is at the left. Courtesy of Greater Pittsburgh Convention and Visitors Bureau. Photo by Andrew Wagner.

The 1946 Hilltopper team of Science Hill High School. John Bowers is number 9.

A New Yorker who never left Johnson City, Tennessee

John Bowers

John Bowers and friends at New York art opening in the 1970s. Left to right: *New Yorker* writer Lis Harris (Bowers' wife), Bowers, author Bruce Jay Friedman and author and editor Melvin Shestack.

When I was a boy, I wondered what living in New York would be like. I rather fancied, after seeing countless movies that featured Gotham and after enjoying long sessions with O. Henry, Fitzgerald and George Jean Nathan, that it would be a tremendously exciting place filled with endlessly fascinating and exotic people. I fancied that if I ever got myself there, I might miraculously turn myself into the suavest dude who ever came down the pike.

I made a mistake. I live now in New York, as I have for 25 years, but I've never wholly left Johnson City. Actually, the place I grew up in, circa the 1930s and 40s, has physically, if not culturally, vanished. It might be Trenton, N.J.—the same interminably long line of cars moving nowhere; the same shopping malls, pizza joints and multiplex cinemas. Like an archaeologist, though, I go back to Johnson City, hoping against hope to find artifacts of that rich life we once had—and find instead, in the center, husks and disfigurement that remind me more of Berlin 1945 than any arcadia I might have known.

When I was growing up—pre-TV, pre-jet travel, pre-plastic—we didn't know our world was so fragile. It seemed as permanent as the Rock of Gibraltar, the Eiffel Tower, the Tower of London. The Southern Railway roared through the heart of town several times a day like the Anvil Chorus, and my father T. R. Bowers was a telegrapher at the depot. I loved to watch the trains—first steam, then diesel. I looked in the softly-lit windows of the Pullman club cars and saw elegantly dressed men and women sipping drinks, smoking nonchalantly, headed to grand places North and South. No one I personally knew, or could ever hope to know, sat in those plush cars. We had movie theaters, four of them, and stage shows popped up periodically on two of them. All of that was magic. Farmers brought fresh produce to open-air stands on Market Street, and I can remember few times eating anything out of a can save Vienna Sausage. When I walked down Main Street, from Fountain Square to Roan Street, I never saw a face I didn't recognize. I lay in bed at night on the second floor of my white frame home on Watauga Avenue and hardly ever heard a car pass I didn't recognize by its sound. Mr. Greenway down the block had a Landmark Buick that rattled the windows and made the bed vibrate as it chugged by. He drove it at around 10 miles per hour, possibly its speed limit. When I heard my father's light step on the front porch, signaling his coming home after his late night shift, I relaxed.

My mother told me that our home had once been the home of the first mayor of Johnson City, and she knew such facts as that because she had once been a schoolteacher. My aunt, Carolyn Miller, lived with us, and she was a teacher at the junior high school two blocks away. She seemed to have taught everyone who ever breathed. A doctor, a lawyer, a plumber would come by—and they all at one time had been a child in knickers in her tightly-disciplined classroom. One look at her and they became that child again, stumbling on words, shuffling feet. "That woman sure as shootin' taught me grammar," all could be relied upon to report.

My mother told me, often, that we came from frontier stock. Southern women, I don't need to remind anyone, dwell on antecedents and regional pride. But frontier stock? What was that? The term just buzzed around my ears without meaning

much. When I got away from East Tennessee and the mountains, when I got anchored in Manhattan, I remembered. I even did some research. We actually hadn't been that removed from the frontier—only a few generations. A goodly number of us were Scots-Irish, but that was a misleading term. We were lowland Scots who'd briefly stopped off in Northern Ireland, but what we were essentially were Celts: black-haired, stern-featured, crazy-appearing sometimes. We had a weakness for religion and spirits. The main ingredient in us, though, as pervasive as mountain laurel in spring, was that we didn't want anyone telling us what to do. We wanted to go our own way and stay independent. We had the inheritance of fleeing alien control; our ancestors had fled from royalty, governments, do-gooders and con artists. I look at the homeless on New York streets and see my antecedents. They'd rather squat squalidly on the cold pavement than lose their freedom by being taken care of in a shelter. We learned to do it on our own, even if what we did was wrong and self-defeating, rather than let someone else do it for us. Make it your own way. Make your own hooch.

In 1946 I went to Korea as an 18-year-old buck private. Korea was war-torn and impoverished beyond imagination. Never anywhere in Appalachia had I seen such degradation. I look at pictures of downtown Seoul today, and it looks as grand and glittering as upper east side Manhattan. Appalachia has never glittered. Koreans band together and work seven days a week, can't seem to get enough of work and trying to improve their "standard of living." That's Koreans.

I am an East Tennessean, living in New York. Perversely, I think I became more of what I inherited, became more of who I am, more *Tennessean*—by leaving. It's what I've heard some say about adultery: It can sometimes save your marriage by making you really appreciate what you left at home. Striking out was my own poor brand of individualism—doing it my own way. Let's face it, community judgment can be fierce in our mountain region. I wanted more freedom—the freedom of ideas, the freedom to challenge and be challenged to the utmost. But I did not leave—couldn't leave—spiritually and fundamentally. Although I tried. In my first three years in New York I whittled down my twang so much that strangers thought I might be elevated enough to come from Connecticut. I hung out with a fairly diverse bunch, but there were no mountaineers or Tennesseans among them. None were around. I went for years without buttermilk and corn bread, without hearing a Baptist pray, or without some good old boy sidling up and saying, "You doing any good these days, buddy?"

Then strangely, really mysteriously, the South found me. It was as if the good Lord knew I'd had enough and had decided to give me surcease. Country music came over the radio. I discovered a restaurant by the Hudson River called the Gulf Coast that served food in the category of the late Mrs. Russell's boarding house in Johnson City, of which no finer endorsement can be made. I would get in a taxi and, lo and behold, some Southerner would be behind the wheel. I wallowed in Flannery O'Connor and C. Vann Woodward. (Actually Woodward himself popped up the other evening in the Main Public Library, where I heard him speak.) Now I think I'm more in touch with the South than I was when there. When there I wanted to be *elsewhere*. Edna St. Vincent Millay's lines rang through my head: "There isn't a train I wouldn't take, no matter where it's going." I'm a true railroader's son in that regard. Now I can't learn enough or be reminded enough about from whence I came.

I am an East Tennessean, living in New York. Perversely, I think I became more of what I inherited, became more of who I am, more Tennessean—by leaving.

And, on reflection, it seems to me that we had as notable a line-up of characters, sinner and saint, right there in old Johnson City as I've run across in New York. Every example of human nature was right there—greed, nobility, generosity and parsimony, outrageous individuals and the mysterious whose secrets they took to the grave. What an experience to have been there. What dramas. There was feet washing in certain churches, Holy Rollers in tents on vacant lots. I was submerged at age 11 into the Baptist faith and haven't been the same since. I have strayed, keep straying, but I haven't rid myself or forgotten the strictures. In my mind, as if a moment ago, I see Dr. William R. Rigell preaching at the dark pulpit of the Central Baptist Church in a neat gray suit and starched white shirt. He scared me then with his probity; he scares me still. He taught me about all I've needed to know about sin and redemption.

Then there was the famed owner of the pool room, the Honorable George Miller. What he taught me I don't know, but it was something. I visualize him totally this moment and recall vividly some of the pool matches he involved himself in. George had a lisp, a game leg (a Jake Leg, it was called) from, legend had it, drinking poisoned booze, and he had more than adequate girth. He was a shrewd and successful businessman but a foolish practitioner of the sport at his emporium. He gambled. He loved to gamble. And he wouldn't be satisfied until he had taken on the best gambler in town. The best gambler then was dark-visioned Harold Wexler. Wexler could be played by Sylvester Stallone: taciturn, strong and willful as an ox. He had style. (I remember him alighting one evening from a wartime train, during his brief perfunctory stint as a sailor, and going immediately to the public phone in Zimmerman's newsstand to call a woman for a rendezvous, after consulting a little black book; I was in a position to observe because I was, as usual, flipping through magazines for free and catching the passing parade. I thought then, and think now, that I never saw a smarter example of sophistication and know-how than the way Harold Wexler handled himself, two seconds after swinging off the train.)

In George Miller's Recreation Center (as the pool room was grandly called) George Miller simply could not beat

Harold Wexler. Miller was a much, much better pool shot (and was required to spot Wexler a few balls, which they heatedly argued over before a game of straight ball began), but no matter what strategy and what cunning Miller tried, he could not prevail over Wexler. He would lose and swear he'd never ever play him again. Then Harold would walk in, silent and superior, and George would weaken and challenge him to just one more high-stakes game. He'd lose. Wexler kept the same sphinx-like composure throughout, aiming slowly and gently plopping them in. George whistled while Wexler aimed, would bang his stick on the floor, burp, yell, "Look out!" just as Wexler shot—but nothing worked. And all other tables in the house went empty while they played. We stood on tiptoes, on chairs, looking over shoulders. The hour grew late, and our mothers wondered what was keeping us downtown so long. In their final game, well after the usual midnight closing, well after George Miller had tried everything else, on the last and deciding ball, George took off all his clothes, stood behind the pocket Wexler aimed at and yelled, in his lisp, "Let's see you make it now, you thon a bitch!" And Wexler did—cool as a cucumber. My Johnson City.

But do not think that we did not have our share of learned souls in town, men and women. The minister of Munsey Memorial was so familiar with Dickens, loved his works so much, that the novelist's name cropped up in his sermons nearly as much as the Almighty's. We had Sidney Gilbreath, once the president of Teacher's College (by which East Tennessee State University will always be known to me), who wrote, for awhile, a marvelously witty and informed column for the *Press-Chronicle*—superior, to my mind, to what graces the pages of any New York publication today. We had Christine Burleson, our authority on Shakespeare and the English Romantics. Johnson City, though at core Scots-Irish, had everything. Down the block from me on West Watauga lived a German family, the Heisels. (I witnessed Frederick Heisel break Bill McDonald's front tooth one afternoon with a toy gun.) Over on Unaka, up a block, lived the Hellers, Jewish. (Ben Heller kept his cow in our backyard barn. Once it escaped, and Ben captured it by leaping on its back just as it started down Boone Street and riding it back like a cowboy, cajoling it all the while with a Yiddish accent.) One of my best friends was Frank Roupas, a Greek. The Kovaches seemed to have a family member in every grade in school (the lovely Eleanor in mine). Bill Kovach is now head of Neiman Fellowships at Harvard. The Kovaches were Albanian. We had the most diverse and exotic foods in Johnson City, of which Patty Smithdeal Fulton is our historian. I can still smell the scents from the variety that wafted between Market and Main around the train station. I can still taste Will Cope's hot tamales. I would rather have the chance at one of those barbecued pork sandwiches that Guy Beeler used to turn out by the carload on Market than go to Lutece in the Big Apple—well, almost as much. But Johnson City, *my* Johnson City has vanished. We didn't know what we had. We thought that what was on the screen at the Majestic Theater, what was *elsewhere*, was where the action was.

John Bowers' latest book is ***Stonewall Jackson: Portrait of a Soldier*** *published by William Morrow, Inc. One of his six published books,* ***No More Reunions,*** *was about growing up in Johnson City. He teaches at Columbia University.*

Geography and Comparative Dangers

They say if you're
a farmer in the country
then you're more apt they
say to be a victim of an
accident than the city-slicker
is or the suburbanite even.
There they have runaway pianos
toppling from third-floor
windows to worry with, lawn fla-
mingos that can turn mean for
no known reason at all. They say
you on the other hand must contend
with the perennial summer perils
of perfumed clover fields dangerously
full of torch-lit fireflies, of as
much as once-a-day exposure to
painterly sunsets, the high-decibeled
whirring of bright-colored birds
stutter-fluttering to your
hand-made feeding stands. They say
if you're a former farmer now
living in town, chances are your
aptness for catastrophe goes
up, never down.

—Wayne Hogan

Wayne Hogan traded in his earlier life as a sociology professor for that of a freelance illustrator/writer. His work appears in ***The Christian Science Monitor, New Letters, Potato Eyes, Appalachian Heritage*** *and others.*

Photo Essay

Backyards

Johnson City, Tennessee

Michael Smith

These black and white photographs of yards taken in the early 1980s are representative of ideas I've worked on in the past and continue to explore today in color. While in graduate school I began photographing trees. I chose fruit trees in orchards where their order and shape were influenced by an agricultural set of priorities. Turning to yards was a logical extension of that work.

Upon graduation I moved to Tennessee and began to figure out ways of photographing domesticated trees, people's houses, their dog and bird houses and other familiar scenes around homes. As a stranger I first concentrated on the overall space, frequently finding myself standing in the corners and along edges of yards making pictures which seemed like inventories, trying always to relate each object to a larger surrounding. As the years have passed, I have reworked the approach, changing my materials and formats, but more importantly, moving closer physically and emotionally to my subject.

—Michael Smith

Michael Smith is associate professor of art at East Tennessee State University. His photographs have appeared in shows regionally and nationally and have been purchased by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He is a frequent contributor to ***Now and Then.***

Bank Examiners

by Pinckney Benedict

"A lot of people are having themselves frozen," Ron says to me. "It's a shot at immortality, I guess." Ron is a big solid guy, an ex-Marine. It's getting late, and I'm drinking water to rehydrate, but Ron is still going, shot and a beer, shot and a beer.

He's a bank examiner from Roanoke, Va., trying to entertain himself in a motel bar. He's wrapped too tight for the time and place, and alcohol doesn't seem to relax him at all. I met him about an hour ago.

"It's a thing that wasn't possible 50 years ago. That's what you call the exponential curve of technological development," Jocko says. Jocko was in the Air Force. He has pushed his chair about three feet away from the table, into the shadows. His voice is quiet. His words sound like they're coming to us from far away. He's a bank examiner from Roanoke as well; the two of them won't say what they're doing in West Virginia. It seems sinister to me, but I don't know much about the banking business.

"It's called cryonics," Jocko says. "Walt Disney did it. He was one of the first. He pioneered the thing."

"Frozen," I say.

"Like a popsicle," Jocko says.

"There's a whole group of them in California that's got a pact," Ron says. "When they check out, it's into the freezer, one by one. I saw it on a show. They've got a date to play tennis in a hundred and fifty years. They figure they'll be young again and cured of whatever disease it was that killed them and ready to hit the courts."

"They can play tennis with Walt Disney," I say. "Imagine a world where a thing like that is possible."

"And Hitler," Jocko says. "I hear they've got his brain in a jar down there in Argentina."

"That's nothing but a movie," Ron says. "Hitler died in a bunker in Berlin. They've got photographic evidence. He's never coming back."

"Just a brain," I say. "You wonder where the harm could be in that. What would they do with Hitler's brain and no Hitler to put it in?"

"That's the only part they need, these cryonics guys," Ron says. "The minute you die they cut your head off your body with this little electric saw and dip it into a vat full of liquid nitrogen. Hundreds of degrees below zero."

"Absolute zero," Jocko says. "Put a banana in there, you can use it for a hammer. Put your hand in and shake it, your fingers will drop off."

"When they check out, it's into the freezer, one by one. . .They've got a date to play tennis in a hundred and fifty years."

"It stops all the processes that go on in the cells," Ron says. "Preserves them without letting any more damage happen."

"Jesus Christ," I say. "I bet it does."

"They've done it with animals and made it work," Ron says. "They can bring the head of a cat back to life for hours at a time. It looks around the room like it's alive and blinks if you shine a bright light in its eyes. One guy even has his head in a vat with five animal heads: two dogs, two cats and a monkey."

"Wake up to that," Jocko says.

"Does he know it?" I ask. "Did he plan for that situation?"

"Who could figure a thing like that?" Ron says. "Maybe he died unexpectedly and they had no place else to put him. He won't complain."

"Not for a time, anyway," Jocko says.

"Or maybe it was cheaper that way. One price to get put in with animal heads, another to get people. It's an expensive proposition, waiting until your youth comes around again."

"The pharaohs in Egypt had a similar idea," Jocko says. "Look how it turned out for them. You see them in museums all the time, and they're just coming apart."

"I saw a movie with something like what you describe in it," I say. "It was called *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*."

"I saw that one too," Jocko says. "A guy is counting some things when he gets his head cut off, and the head keeps counting when it rolls on the ground. It doesn't even know it's dead."

"That's not part of it," I say. "Not that I remember."

"I know the one you're talking about," Ron says. "Warren Oates has this head that came off a gigolo. He carries it around in a bag."

"That's the one. He keeps it fresh with dry ice," I say. "That's what made me think of it."

Ron turns to Jocko. "You remember. I rented it on tape one time. We watched it over at my house and you thought it was pretty funny. It had that Mexican girl in it that you liked."

"Oh, yeah," Jocko says. He doesn't sound convinced. "That one."

"Some people I know have a hunting camp in Montana that they go to every year," Ron says. "A beautiful place in the mountains. It's right near where Warren Oates and what's-his-name, the director—Sam Peckinpah—had their places."

"Did your friends know these guys?" I ask.

"Sure they did," Ron says. "Everybody knows everybody up in those mountains. They said Oates was a regular guy like you might meet on the

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Pinckney Benedict's critically acclaimed collection of short stories, ***Town Smokes,*** *was published in 1987. He is a frequent contributor to* ***Wigwag,*** *where "Bank Examiners" first appeared. He lives on his family's dairy farm in Lewisburg, W.Va.*

street, but Peckinpah was a son of a bitch. He'd about crap if you crossed the line onto his place. He'd make you go around even if you were carrying a goddam elk carcass out. Oates didn't mind much, but that's the kind of guy Peckinpah was." Ron stubs his cigarette in the ashtray, grinds the butt.

"They're both dead now," I say.

"Yeah," Ron says. "Dead and gone. They call Peckinpah's place by his first name now. They call it Sam. Like they say, 'Think I'll go over to Sam now,' and they mean the ranch where he lived. Strange." We sit in silence for a while. Ron continues to wreck the cigarette in the ashtray.

"Tell me," I say, when the lack of conversation gets to be uncomfortable. "When they wake these guys up, these frozen heads, how will they get around? I mean, just a head, it seems inconvenient."

"Clones," Ron says. "Or they'll make robots for them. It's the future. Who can tell exactly?"

"I guess," I say. "It's just hard to imagine how they'll fit in."

"Probably they won't," Jocko says. It's the most excited he's sounded all evening. "Probably they'll just use them for cheap slave labor. What kind of rights would a person from the past have? Would they have the vote? I don't think so." He leans forward. "They'll just wake them up and stick them on some starship and send them out to a mining colony on another planet. Wire them up and use their brains for energy. Nothing to stop it." He leans back again.

"Not a single solitary thing," Ron says, and he glares at me. His look makes me feel like I should argue with him and Jocko, but I can't imagine what my argument would be. After he stares at me like that for a minute, Ron pushes his chair away and joins Jocko in the shadows.

"What are you two guys doing here?" I ask. "Bank examiners and all."

"Nothing," Ron says. "No big thing. Just checking some records is all."

"We need to see some people about some things," Jocko says.

"Cheaters?" I say. "You're on the trail of tax evaders."

"No," Ron says. "We're not from the government. We don't do anything like that. We're privately employed."

"No big deal then," I say. "I don't have to try to get my money out of the bank before you shut it down."

"Negative," Jocko says. "Our company sent us up here. We're just doing a routine job."

"Leave your money where it is," Ron says. Like Jocko's, his voice now seems to come from a long way off. I take a drink of water and decide that, in a minute or two, I'm going to get up and get out of here.

singles fish fry beckley wv

leather hands & throats
stroke sweaty beers

hacking up the coal dust
phlegm of the earth.

a violin pours like honey

bees circling
light pink melon rinds.

in the shimmer
near the fire
your earrings
dangle
like a lure

hoping to hook
a keeper.

—Kevin J. Smith

Detroit in '52

Was Detroit a dream?
I feel older and stronger
without my mama and dad
around.
Ford gave me a job, and
everybody knows you gotta
be a man to work where I
was working.
Hauling hay, milking cows
don't seem the same anymore.

—David Graham

David Graham is a teacher in Warren County, Tenn. His poetry will soon appear in ***Appalachian Heritage*** *and* ***Word & Image****.*

Kevin J. Smith is a librarian in Trotwood, Ohio. His poems have appeared in ***Wind***, ***Farmer's Market***, ***The Panhandler*** *and others.*

Turning Point

by Drema S. Redd

Vandalia Elementary School in Charleston, W.Va., still had an old-fashioned mechanical bell in 1966. Beginnings and endings were announced by manually pulling a long pole that ran down the wall and disappeared into holes cut into the three floors of the crumbling old building. I was in sixth grade and official bell ringer. My parents had presented me with my first watch, a Timex from Cohen's Drug Store, as a token of their pride. In the hollow where I grew up, pride was always shown in a token way. Among the very poor, it does not do to be too special.

The last day of school before Christmas break was the last day I would ring the bell. Our school had been condemned to be torn down to make way for construction of Interstate 64 through Charleston. Eventually, I-64's Sherman's march through the city would take the homes of most of the children I knew, as well as my own, but that is another story.

Vandalia was on a hill beside the Kanawha Turnpike, overlooking the railroad tracks, and below them McCorkle Avenue and the cloverleaf at the foot of the Patrick Street Bridge. Further beyond lay the Kanawha River with a Union Carbide plant on an island in its middle and beyond that, downtown. Odors from the plant and the sounds of traffic and trains were part of the atmosphere. Our school was all wood floors and tall ceilings with large windows. It was an old, comfortable building. On this last day, ringing the last bell, I cried a little.

In a burst of compassion for the culture shock that awaited us, our teacher, an earnest young black man, had spent a portion of class time for the last few weeks getting us ready for our new circumstances. Mr. Smedley told us that Weberwood Elementary was an already-established building to which a wing had been added in anticipation of a growing population. We were to occupy the new wing. We were relieved to learn that we would remain in a class to ourselves, and he would still be our teacher. The black kids were especially glad to hear this. Everyone knew there were no blacks at Weberwood.

Most puzzling, our teacher gingerly tried to get across the idea that Weberwood kids "weren't like us." Their parents were lawyers and doctors and teachers. We were at a collective disadvantage here. Those of us who had daddies didn't have well-employed ones, although Bobby Legg claimed his daddy was an astronaut (he was really a miner), and John Lawless, the class brain, was the son of a reporter for the *Gazette*. Mr. Smedley gently encouraged us to overlook the material and see ourselves as equals in what really mattered: our ability to be educated.

On the first day after Christmas break, an unusually quiet bunch of Vandalia refugees was bused, most of us for the first time, out of our hollows and up the hill through the middle-class peacefulness of split-level houses and nice cars. Weberwood was everything Vandalia was not. That was my immediate impression as the bus pulled up to the white concrete curb. The school was very large, yellow brick, new and tidy. Inside, the corridors smelled pleasantly of floor wax and air freshener. The windows were small and dainty and had colored blinds. The bell was an electronically-timed buzz, not the joyous fluid song we were used to at Vandalia. There was a cafeteria and a playground to die for. And there were the local kids—lots of them—being dropped off in big new cars, wearing clean new clothes and salon haircuts.

After meeting up with Mr. Smedley

and becoming acquainted with our new classroom (with its own adjoining Boys and Girls rooms!), we were ushered into the cafeteria for a "get-acquainted" party, free milk and cookies for all. We newcomers mingled awkwardly with the old-timers, shyly making introductions and being polite. The black kids stayed in a huddle in the corner, ignoring Mr. Smedley's attempts to be a role model of successful integration. Under the watchful, expectant eyes of the principal and teachers, the rest of us gamely gave the impression of enjoying the novelty of meeting new friends.

As the weeks passed, one group of girls, Brenda, Marty and Sonia, began to pay some attention to me and my friends. By spring, Brenda was calling me at home to talk. I was delighted and proud, until it occurred to me that our conversations were not the usual "little girl" stuff. Perhaps I would make a few remarks about common acquaintances or teachers' strange habits, but then the conversation would become interrogatory in nature. "What does your dad do?" Brenda asked, to which I had no good answer. He drove an ice-cream truck at the time and drew a little welfare, so I mumbled something about his working "for" Broughton Dairy. "How many TV sets do you have?" To my relief, I was able to reply, "Two"—not mentioning that one was broken and used as a nightstand in my grandmother's room. "How many rooms in your house?" I included the bathroom to arrive at a spacious six. How many cars? What kind of pets? How many phones? Where do you vacation? I began to feel my worth being totaled, and thus learned the core of the difference between the middle class and the welfare class: they had it, and we didn't.

The following year, Weberwood's sixth graders matriculated into seventh grade at South Charleston Junior High. The old timers of the suburb virtually ignored the Vandalia group. We remained separated by a visible barrier of material goods. My more well-to-do classmates taught me to feel ashamed of my Goodwill clothes and dime-store sneakers. Class divisions were firmly erected now.

The most obvious advantages I had in growing up in Charleston over my rural counterparts is that I had more before my eyes to long for. At a time closely coincidental with this turning point, I promised myself that my children would not be ashamed. Always an avid reader, I had decided around third grade to become a teacher. Thus, upon graduation from high school, I became the first member of my family to attend college. By then I was used to our culture's tendency to create subtle degrees of class distinction, but at the same time I was aware that the only thing that could really hold me back was myself.

Today, I have two children, ages 12 and eight, who see both worlds. They enjoy a middle-class upbringing with a mother who is a professional and a gainfully employed father. They have softball league and Girl Scouts and art classes at the museum. But they see their cousins' poverty, and my mother's, and they know from whence I came. It is the possibility of their introduction into the life I lived that keeps me ambitious. Being poor in urban Appalachia is little different from being poor anywhere else, and nowhere is it glamorous.

Drema S. Redd teaches English, film and fiction at Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va.

Visitin' Charleston

What you do is
if you're comin' West on 60
and you run outa gas on top of Gauley Mountain,
just don't hit your brakes
and if you catch all the lights right
well, where you stop rollin'
why, that's Charleston.

When you get there, stay low.
Don't show 'em too much,
just get your timing down,
tell 'em what they wanta hear.

What you'd really like to do is hit the streets.
Slip outa that poetic mellow
and kick into a primordial chain-saw screamer.
Just rip the bars all night
and then bounce into the bus station for breakfast
with steam comin' off your shoulders
and nobody wantin' to get within ten feet.
Feel that satisfying glaze of fear
comin' over what's left of your eyes
while the gravy dries in your moustache.

When they ask you why,
just tell 'em what you said before:
"It's more fun than bein' happy."

—Kirk Judd

Kirk Judd, a native of West Huntington in Wayne County, W.Va., works in an Ashland, Ky., steel mill. A collection of his poetry, ***Field of Vision****, was published in Huntington.*

The Dancing Bear Can Waltz

Norma Myers Thomas (left) and Amy Tipton Gray (right) return to the primary school where they first became friends.

But She Can't Do the Lambada

Amy Tipton Gray and Norma Myers Thomas spend an hour at the corner deli in Johnson City, Tenn., (yes, Virginia, there are corner delis in East Tennessee) talking about growing up in a city in the mountains

Amy Tipton Gray, who teaches at Caldwell Community College in Hudson, N.C., and Norma Myers Thomas, who is the head of the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, have been best of friends from the time they were students together at Henry Johnson Elementary School in the 1960s, through high school at Science Hill and college at ETSU (all in Johnson City). They have both developed a strong commitment to Appalachia, spending much of their professional time and personal thought on regional issues. Their ideas were naturally colored by their upbringing in this large town (or small city) in the mountains. When they got together to discuss growing up as Appalachians in an urban environment for ***Now and Then,*** *they found both positive and negative forces contributed to their present views. The conversation was facilitated by Roberta Herrin.*

Amy Tipton Gray: My grandfather Tipton moved to Keystone (a section of Johnson City, now a housing project) in the 20s. He ran a store, and he kept the kinds of things people wanted—a variety. That was the whole point. When you moved to town, and you got a little money, you wanted what everyone else had. You wanted the convenience, you wanted to do things the easy way, like using self-rising flour.

Daddy got to college on a baseball scholarship. It was assumed that, of course, I would go to State.

Norma Myers Thomas: My father's family was from Stony Creek in Carter County. My grandfather would go up to the coal fields and work for periods, and then come back. My grandfather moved here to work in a furniture factory in 1924

when my father was two, so my father grew up in town.

My mother's side of the family lived on a farm in Washington County. They didn't own land; they rented a farm and mother's parents farmed while some of the kids worked in the plants (the rayon factories in Carter County). She didn't really move into town until just before she was married.

She had a real dislike for living in the country, and she would never consider living outside the city limits. To her, farm life was just drudgery.

My grandmother lived in town. The front yard was about five feet deep from the sidewalk to the front porch, and the backyard was big enough to park a car in. The only place we had to play was on the porch. And we'd watch traffic go by. It's what you do when you live in town.

My grandmother planted her tiny little plot by the signs. I made the mistake of telling a teacher about it once. She was incensed. She said we should never do ignorant things like that. We weren't supposed to do things like country people did. So I stopped talking about my cousins, about that part of my life.

We got our understanding of class structure in the school system. There was a definite ruling group, and you couldn't get into it unless you were already a part of that group. And you got to be part of that group by who you were, by who your family was in town.

ATG: There was a real line of demarcation. We walked to school every day, but the kids who would later join the fraternities and sororities at Science Hill, were picked up by their mothers in cars every day.

In our situation, we didn't have anything to validate us. It was very rigid. Smart never brought us status. Except sometimes from teachers. But if you were smart and you had a mountain family background that you were trying to understand, and you had teachers telling you, like some of ours did, that Tennessee was not a good place, you had a lot of conflict. We had teachers pushing us not to go to State, telling us to go someplace better. But for us there was no option—it was that or nothing.

What I got from my mother was the idea that no matter what, you don't change, you stay who you are. If they don't like it, that is their problem. She always pushed me to be an individual. But you can see what kind of conflict that caused.

People tell me that because I grew up in town, I don't have the right to be angry about what has happened to my family, what has happened in the region. Now if I had grown up on a mountainside, it would be okay for me to be angry about what people say and do to and write about hillbillies. But I grew up in town, therefore, I am not a mountain person, and I don't have any right to be angry about any of this.

I get this message in many ways, in the things I read, in the things people say. "Why are you so mad about that?" It's like, according to them, I should not have this sense of place. You can't be urban and Appalachian. If you're urban, you're some other animal. I don't see that differentiation. I see it as a layering of cultures, a layering of values. I've got some urban values; I've got some rural values; I've got some mountain values; I've got some Deep South values; I've got some American values. For all I know I've got values from Thailand, from all that Eastern-Asian stuff I've read. What it comes down to for me is this: I get angry when other people try to set and define my limitations for me, which has happened to me a lot in my life. On the one hand you get told you can do anything, you can be anything you want, go anywhere you want to go, but on the other hand, they say, it's only this far. The dancing bear can waltz, but she can't do the Lambada.

I didn't know until I was a college student that I was hillbilly. Somebody finally explained it to me.

I have been calling myself a hillbilly for awhile now, sort of the same way Dwight Yoakum does, as Anndrena Belcher, (a storyteller and dancer) does. As a political thing. It's very political for me.

"I didn't know until I was a college student that I was hillbilly. Somebody finally explained it to me."

NMT: What disturbs me more than anything is this outside view of what you're supposed to be like, and when you don't fit that, or they come here, and they don't see that everywhere, they don't know how to take it—or they want to reconstruct it.

When I was in Cincinnati for a conference, there was this plumber who asked me where I was from, and when I told him, he said, "Oh, you're from the mountains." Then he started telling me about all the mountain people who had moved to Cincinnati, who lived in the slums. And he said, "You know, they have the most beautiful children. But when they get old, the women just look awful. They get this stringy hair and their teeth fall out and they just look terrible. But you know, they can really make handicrafts."

But I really think that an awful lot that we attribute to being Appalachian is really not that much different from other small towns or other rural areas. I guess I never felt that different. Now I always felt the difference between city and country, but it was never Appalachia.

My father's family thought Stony Creek was the most wonderful place on earth. My grandmother has a kind of spiritual attachment to Stony Creek. She's been happy in town. But she's always kept a part of that connection with her.

There have to be conflicts when your family has just recently come from this really rural life, like mine did, and then changed to factory work and lived in houses on little lots with neighbors right next to you and little neighborhood schools and a whole city environment—there had to be conflicts there that are going to take time to work out. It's not just some Appalachian conflict. It's going from rural life where work is in tune with your whole life, holistic, to work in an urban environment where, if you're working in a factory, work is compartmentalized.

*Amy Tipton Gray's chapbook of poetry, **The Hillbilly Vampire**, recently released by Rowan Mountain Press, is reviewed by Robert J. Higgs on page 31.*

Truck Route

by Robert Morgan

"He's out of intensive care," Aunt Jennie said. "And he wants to see you."

"I can't get up there till Saturday," I said. "Will that be OK?"

"He don't trust me or Wilma to look after his affairs," Aunt Jennie said. "You know how Forrest is."

"Oh I know," I said.

"He won't trust a woman to look after business," she said.

After promising to see her on the weekend I hung up and returned to the contracts on my desk. Atlanta was boiling outside, and I imagined how cool it must be in the mountains. There could at least be a breeze in the creek valley, in the narrow fields along the branch where I used to help Uncle Forrest with his pole beans. Of course if I was still there my back would be sore from carrying poles or digging holes, or at this time of year from carrying out hampers of beans. And my skin would be crusted with dirt and sweat and smut spores.

I hoped Uncle Forrest didn't want to change his will. Many people get confused or senile after a heart attack and begin doing awkward things. I had made a will for him two or three years before and put it in their safe deposit box. There was no reason to change it I could think of. But I'd have to see what was on his mind.

On Saturday morning I told Carol I'd be back by Sunday afternoon, if not before. "Don't you want to go?" I said. "We could make it a short vacation with a side trip to Blowing Rock or The Smokies."

"You go this time," she said. "You have business, and I can catch up on a lot of loose ends here."

She would not have said so, but she dreaded seeing members of my family on their own turf, in part because there was always some dispute underway, about land boundaries, or who would inherit the silverware, or firing the new preacher.

I kissed her and threw my duffel bag into the trunk. Swinging out the expressway to I-85, I was in the foothills within two hours. The new highway never ceased to impress me. When I first went off to Emory, it took us five or six hours in the pickup on winding roads to reach the campus. It had seemed a major, epic journey out of the mountains to the city. Now going back was just a matter of setting the cruise control on the Lincoln and listening to the FM stations as you shot through cuts and over red fields.

It was so early when I got to the mountains I decided to not go directly to the hospital. Early morning was always the time for doctor's rounds and tests and washing the patients. I would rather get there before noon, or just after noon.

The highway shot far above the moonshine coves and winding roads of Dark Corner, long since turned into a pristine watershed for the Greenville Reservoir. Just after I reached the crest of the Blue Ridge, I turned off at the exit to the creek road. It would kill some time before going to the hospital to drive by the old place but not bother Aunt Jennie or Wilma till later.

My pulse accelerated as I entered the valley. Many times as I had returned, while in college and in service, and over the years since, and glad as I was I had moved away, I always felt that irrational rush when approaching the creek. I laughed at myself, but the tightening in my throat was there just the same.

The smooth geometry of the cloverleaf gave way to a small paved road that wound back into a narrow valley. The entrance to the creek community was just a throat between the ridges where the creek poured through, and the road ran along beside it. People used to say a small dam there would flood the whole valley, and the power company had considered the site more than once. It was the smallness of the stream more than the protests of the creek farmers that made them decide against the impoundment.

Once in the valley the road became gravel, and late summer vegetation leaning over the ditches was silver with dust. The leaves of sumac looked gilded with mica powder. Only the joe-pye heads just blooming reached fresh and colorful above the other weeds. This was the season I used to take late beans to market with Daddy and Uncle Forrest. Even now late summer suggests money for school clothes and milk shakes at the Dairy Queen.

I slowed down to keep from raising dust in the corridor between weeds. My family had lived on the creek and on its feeder branches for more than a hundred and fifty years, farming little patches of bottom soil, putting an occasional crop on the hillside, mostly pasturing cows and horses on the slopes above. Because the fields were so narrow, they had to be farmed intensely and well to make them pay. The little aprons of soil were rich but liable to flood in a rainy season. Big stalks of Spanish needles and cockleburrs grew right on the banks and had to be mowed down.

Standing barefoot in that field dirt you felt almost level with the water. In a dry year the crops there flourished when the farmers with bigger fields had only withered stalks.

Uncle Forrest loved the intensity of farming on such a small scale. He knew a thousand ways to cut his costs, using exactly the right amount of fertilizer and no more, using manure when he had it, the least amount of seeds to get a stand. He saved fuel for the tractor by using mules for everything except the heavy turning and harrowing. He saved every bit of wire stretched in the beans and even made some twine serve for two seasons. His posts were locust that did not have to

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Robert Morgan was born and grew up in Henderson County, N.C., and teaches at Cornell. His most recent books are ***The Blue Valleys****, stories, from Peachtree and* ***Sigodlin****, poems, from Wesleyan University. An upcoming issue of* ***Iron Mountain Review*** *will be devoted to his work.*

be replaced every year or two.

The first fields I drove by were six or seven feet deep in hogweed and ragweed. It even looked as though some pine seedlings had taken in the bottom land. Then I remembered that Forrest in recent years had put several of his patches in shrubbery, mostly white pine and hemlocks, to sell to the Columbia and Atlanta markets. The trees were the residue of his nursery, unmowed and untrimmed. The fields were brimming, as though with floods that buried everything in late summer riot.

The hedge in front of the house had grown so high you could see only the roof from the road. The driveway had washed in recent rains, and the tracks were stretched out of alignment in curving gullies. Uncle Forrest used to get his shovel out and fix the drive after every hard rain. Sometimes even before the rain had stopped entirely he was out, scooping gravel and sand from the ditch and strewing them back on the tracks.

I hoped Aunt Jennie wouldn't see me drive by. The hedge was probably too thick to see through from the house, unless she was out on the porch peeling peaches or stringing beans. I would talk to her after seeing Forrest. It would be awkward to see her before.

As I continued up the road something made my bones ache with dread. Besides the grown-up fields and washed-out road and pastures buried in weeds, a hint of fear hovered just at the edge of recall. Around the dusty curve the Miller house came into view. Wardlaw Miller had married a cousin of Daddy's and settled on the adjoining farm, though he kept his job with the Fiske-Carter construction company in Greenville. His daughter Margaret had been my sweetheart when we were in school. It was assumed by everybody we would marry. But I went off to college, and we drifted further and further from any proposal or commitment. I began dating girls at the university, and she went out with boys back home. Then I met Carol in my first year in law school, and we decided to marry.

Every time I thought of Margaret a sting went through my nerves and skin. I had never made any promises, and yet...Margaret was popular and could have married many boys in the valley, yet she never had. I heard she worked in the Savings and Loan at East Flat Rock. I had not seen her in many years.

I slowed as I approached the Miller house. It was in better shape than Uncle Forrest's place. Either the house was newly painted or it had new siding, for it shone in the morning sun. And there were light green shutters I did not remember, and a deck had been built on the side. There was a woman mowing the grass in front, and I saw it was Margaret. She wore cut-off jeans and had a dark tan for someone who worked in a savings and loan. I hoped she had not seen me, but waved just in case she had.

I had never seen weeds that tall by the road. It must be the Greenhouse Effect making everything spurt up, I thought. Or maybe the topsoil and fertilizer washing off the creek above.

Though I wanted to stop and speak to her, I kept driving. Many times I had fantasized seeing her again and saying the right things to her, telling her how much I still cared for her, and had always cared for her. Even though I had done what I wanted to do, and had to do, in going to the university and marrying Carol, I still cared for her. I wanted to explain it to her. Even though she may have forgotten me entirely, I wanted to talk with her, to find out how she felt. I might stop by later that afternoon.

Further up the road dust weighed on the weeds like brown sugar. Big blackberry briars leaned over the road in places, and weeds were so high along the creek I couldn't see over them into Mary's field where Uncle Forrest used to grow his potatoes and tomatoes. I had never seen weeds that tall by the road. It must be the Greenhouse Effect making everything spurt up, I thought. Or maybe the topsoil and fertilizer washing off the creek above. Beyond the curve the church came into view like a white apparition in the trees. Like everything else in the valley it was made on a small scale. I had heard it was the smallest Baptist church in the county, just a simple chapel with a steeple and gallon-size bell. It was still unbricked, long after the richer churches all around had been enclosed in red official-looking brick. The church had also been painted recently and shone like a frosted cake among the tulip poplars.

Every time I saw the church I felt a pain in my guts. Maybe it was the long revival services I had sat through there, the sweaty preachers shouting damnation, or memory of holding hands with Margaret during Sunday School.

As I wound up the narrow valley, expecting to see the little bean patches and nurseries of my second cousins and third cousins, I found one field after another buried in weeds and briars. The weeds were higher than a man's head by the creek. Suddenly it struck me: all the older men were sick like Uncle Forrest and unable to farm, or dead like Daddy, or in nursing homes. The younger men had moved away as I had, or worked in the cotton mills or electric plants. There was no one left to tend the little plots and keep cattle on the upland pastures. Grass around all the houses had been mowed, but the fields were abandoned to wild seeds and the survivors of nurseries. Even the cousins who had stayed home were no longer working the land.

Further up the road there were several new houses on shelves cut in the mountainside, and Thunderbirds and Toyotas sat in the driveways. Near the house where I thought my cousin Mickey lived there was a swimming pool, and a vast white satellite dish tilted toward a point far above the valley like a heliotropic fungus.

Near the head of the valley the creek was no more than a branch running through a pasture where saddle horses grazed. A large sign said "Camp Lake in the Sky." A gravel driveway led up the hill. Aunt Jennie had told me last year a group from Charleston had bought the

Continued on Page 40

LIFE IN URBAN APPALA

Welch, W. Va., the shopping and entertainment center for the nearby m
camps. Photo by Russell Lee, 1946. From the National Archives.

Asheville, N.C. From the Southern Highlands Research Center,
University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Saturday afternoon street scene, Welch, W. Va., 1946. Photo by Russell Lee. From the
National Archives.

Contemporary Welch, W. Va. Photo by K

Kenneth Murray's two books of photos on the r
***Portrait of Appalachia**, published by Appalach*

Ken Sherman is a freelance photographer and

ACHIA NOW AND THEN

ining Mall, Johnson City, Tenn., 1988. Photo by Michael Smith.

Johnson City, Tenn., 1988.
Photo by Michael Smith.

enneth Murray.

*egion are **Down to Earth People** and*
ian Consortium Press.

community organizer in West Virginia.

Charleston, W. Va., 1980s. Photo by Ken Sherman.

DOWN HOME and UPSCALE

THE EVOLUTION OF BLUEGRASS MUSIC

Tim Stafford talks with Bluegrass historian Neil Rosenberg about how this music rooted in the mountains got to be so trendy

Country musician Bill Monroe joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1939. But it was in 1945, when a skinny banjo player from North Carolina named Earl Scruggs with a distinctive, rolling three-finger style joined Monroe's band, the Bluegrass Boys, that the foundation for a musical genre was laid. Monroe's band from this period included Scruggs on banjo, Lester Flatt on guitar, Chubby Wise on fiddle, Howard Watts on bass, and Monroe on the mandolin. This group's distinctive sound created such excitement that bands such as the Stanley Brothers from Dickenson County, Va., began to copy them almost immediately. When Flatt and Scruggs left the Bluegrass Boys in 1948 and formed their own band, there were three important bands that became models for young fans and musicians who had been entranced by this new sound.

In the early days, the music was popular in the Appalachian region, especially in the area around East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia, where radio stations such as WCYB Bristol featured live country music. But it was the urban folk song revival of the late 1950s and early 1960s that exposed the music to a larger audience.

During the revival, dozens of professional bluegrass bands were playing along with Monroe, Flatt and Scruggs and the Stanley Brothers. By the mid-1960s, the first outdoor bluegrass festivals were held in Virginia and North Carolina.

Now numbering in the hundreds all across the world, the festivals are still the main source of income for bluegrass musicians, who number in the thousands and come from all walks of life. Bluegrass has become one of the United States' most popular cultural exports, taking root virtually the world over. For example, there are over 200 bluegrass bands in Czechoslovakia, many of whom have had to struggle to get the most basic musical supplies such as strings and instruments.

According to Census Bureau statistics (see sidebar page 26), the average American bluegrass fan is an urban, relatively affluent, white collar white male, who is most likely a musician himself. This doesn't jibe with the mainstream image of bluegrass, much of which comes from the stereotypes of the mass media. Television programs such as *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Hee Haw* have certainly promoted a hayseed caricature of the music. It's an undeserved reputation. With the emergence of several formidable independent record labels which feature bluegrass and with the formation of a professional trade organization in the 1980s, bluegrass appears to be poised to capture an increased share of the mainstream American audience. Indeed, one of the goals of the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) is to demystify bluegrass for the public—to make it clear that a young music which demands virtuosity and powerful, soulful singing is not hayseed in the least.

Recently, I spoke with Neil Rosenberg, the author of *Bluegrass, A History* (University of Illinois Press, 1985), about bluegrass and its transformation from a rural art form appreciated mainly by Appalachians to a skill practiced world-wide and featured in such venues as Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center. Rosenberg, who's originally from Berkeley, Calif., was another one of those city kids who was captured by the "high lonesome" sound of bluegrass during the folk song revival. Today, he teaches folklore at Memorial University in Newfoundland.

Tim Stafford: How do you define bluegrass?

Neil Rosenberg: Bluegrass is a musical form that's performed by self-accompanied musicians. There's both singing and picking—the vocalists accompany themselves—so you have this mix of the two back and forth. The vocalists often sing in harmony, and there's a lot of emphasis upon that sort of togetherness that's symbolized by harmony singing. There is that in the playing as well—that is, all the instruments have certain roles, but there's also a place in the music for instrumentalists to come forward. So you have this combination of individual and group in the music.

It's a music that is in its origins a kind of commercial country music but also has been perceived as a kind of folk music and in fact, has both of those things in it. The instruments are guitar, mandolin, fiddle, banjo and bass, all acoustic—sometimes the dobro is added—and played in styles which are associated with the leading figures in the field: Bill Monroe's mandolin style and Earl Scruggs's banjo style, for example. In contrast to mainstream country music, bluegrass tends to be faster in tempo. Generally, even the slow songs are faster in bluegrass. And in contrast to country music, I think it also tends to have kind of a denser texture. Often more things are happening musically and vocally, too.

In the early years, there were a lot of newly-composed songs. They tended both structurally and in terms of content to be based on earlier models, so they reflected tradition and earlier streams of pop music. Instrumental music tended to be either newly composed on the same older models or to be old stuff done in a very symbolic way. In the early years of bluegrass, old-time fiddle was mostly symbolic, as far as I can see. You know, you go back and listen to those broadcasts, and you get the fiddler playing the traditional fiddle tune "Sally Goodin" three times, and that was it. Pretty perfunctory.

TS: People assume that bluegrass is much older than it is, and I think that's because of these rural attributes. And there are ties, of course, to the older types of music, but it's really not that old.

NR: A funny thing about it is the naming of bluegrass. That name was used by the original core group of people who came from working-class, rural, upland Southern backgrounds mainly.

Bluegrass on the rise. Lester Flatt (guitar) and Earl Scruggs (banjo) at Carnegie Hall at the height of the folksong revival, 1963. Other members of the band are Jake Tullock, bass; Paul Warren, fiddle; Josh Graves, dobro, and Billy Powers, guitar (partially hidden).

Those people probably were using that word by the early 1950s some, and it was a word that, for people who were in touch with that music, meant something right away. Because they knew about Bill Monroe and what "bluegrass" meant in that context. But I don't think it was a word that had the kind of definitive power or meaning or importance that it gained later because those people didn't really need to have a name to call it. It was a word that was used almost jokingly, I think, in its earliest use. It would have been like calling Western Swing music "Texas Playboy."

I think it became a serious name when young, urban folk song enthusiasts encountered the music out of its cultural context and said, "Well, what is this music?" Having a name made it seem more real, just like when Alan Freed started calling this combination of uptempo hillbilly music and rhythm and blues "rock 'n' roll." It happened about the same time. One of the first times I encountered the word "bluegrass" in print was on a 1957 Folkways album, *American Banjo Scruggs Style*.

It's very much like naming exotic art. I think that's an interesting metaphor to use, because exotic art is there, and what do you make of it? Well, the first thing you do is name it. You say, "This is an example of thus and so. It comes from this place," and so on. But as far as the makers and the culture in which the art exists are concerned, there may be in its actual creation all kinds of imponderables and uncertainties. But for the consumer who comes from outside, it seems very clear-cut. And so then that lends more power to the word "bluegrass," because suddenly it becomes useful to market the music that way.

So what happened was that these urban folk music enthusiasts came to this music particularly when it started appearing on LP. You talk to people like Pete Wernick, (the New York City native who was a banjoist with the popular group Hot Rize for 12 years) and some of the others who started in the early 1960s, and their first records were Folkways LPs or maybe Flatt and Scruggs Columbia LPs, and these records all were explicitly marketed as bluegrass. And that led consumers to look for other records that were marketed the same way, and it led record companies to quickly label their product.

TS: What was the urban folk song revival?

NR: The revival, or the "great boom," really got underway in 1958 with the Kingston Trio's first hits. But the ideas behind it had formed much earlier—the whole idea was to present folk music as a

sort of a symbol of heritage and as an alternative to highly commercialized pop music, like Patti Page, Frank Sinatra and Pat Boone. It was more meaningful, more accessible and also different, exotic, and therefore somewhat fashionable. The folk music revival happened just about the same time that rock 'n' roll happened. Rock 'n' roll in those early years tended to be an urban working class music and a dance music, whereas folk music was more of a cerebral, urban, middle-class phenomenon which was for listening and singing along at parties—that sort of thing. And in this context, there were two things going on: there were young people performing and trying to learn this synthesis of styles that the Kingston Trio and the Weavers and Pete Seeger represented, and then there were others who were trying to imitate closely specific models of folk music. And there you get into people like the bluegrass and blues people—these young folks who were trying to learn from records and who thought of bluegrass as a special style but an acceptable style, even though it was commercial, because of the fact that it had no electric instruments. That was very important. Rock'n' roll was electric, and electric sort of symbolized modern decadence.

The banjo became tremendously popular as an exotic new instrument. Nobody had ever heard of a five string banjo in my peer group—you know, people in high school in the 1950s. I can remember when my friend Mayne Smith showed up with a five string banjo and said, "Pete Seeger plays a five string banjo." And I didn't know what that was. I always liked the banjo, but the banjo to me was the Hoosier Hot Shots and Eddie Peabody. And so the banjo was a particularly appealing element in all of this, because it was definitely a traditional instrument. Pete Seeger had made a big deal of it, so that was part of the appeal.

The urban folk revival has really never died—at least the interest in music of this sort that has connections with roots, which is an alternative and is meaningful in various ways. That still exists, and it's much more organized and well-run now than it ever was. Companies like Rounder, the world's largest independent record label, really cater to that market, and National Public Radio, which wasn't around then, feeds on it and feeds into it.

Bluegrass has been a part of the picture right from the start, and bluegrass bands in the 1960s were at folk festivals and became associated with that whole thing and have never been disassociated. And a lot of people were exposed to the music at one time or another and have come back to it in later life and have brought their children to it in some cases. And so, for example, a skill like learning to play the banjo has become much more accessible through books, tapes and videotapes. These days, it's something that people might learn the way they learn classical guitar or something else.

Back in the 1950s, it was a guarded skill. There are all these stories around about how Scruggs wouldn't play in front of his buddies backstage. Whether they're true or not is not as important as the fact that they're told. They're the sort of legends that tell you something about the attitudes of the time. Why did he cover his Scruggs pegs? He says it's because it's a messy job of covering the holes. I know when I got started back in the 1950s, the word was that he didn't

"Liking bluegrass music is more prevalent among those with higher incomes, the better educated, younger (but not youngest) adults, whites, and males."

—Public Participation in the Arts, 1982: Overall Project Report
United States Bureau of the Census

Bluegrass Music Holds the Additional Market Shares Country Radio Needs

Perhaps you didn't know that the United States Bureau of Census determined that **40 million Americans like bluegrass music** and one million consider it their favorite type of music. The same study found that bluegrass fans are 15 times more likely to earn over $50,000 per year than are country music fans. If you missed that study, you probably don't realize that the bluegrass audience is significantly more urban than the country listeners, besides being better educated and better employed (seven times more likely to be professional or managerial) than the audience for country music.

Talk about age: 55.7 percent of the bluegrass music fans are between 25 and 44 years old. That concentration is almost twice the distribution of the American population as a whole. Bluegrass fans are three times more likely to fall in the 25 to 34 range than are country fans. Bluegrass adds the most desirable listeners to your country station. What's more, 90.6 percent of bluegrass fans are radio listeners as compared to 76.1 percent for the general U.S. population!

You'd better believe that bluegrass fans are consuming more than radio. Only AOR (Album-Oriented Rock), CHR (Contemporary Hit Radio) and classical listeners are better record buyers. Of the bluegrass audience 74 percent purchase records, as compared to 54 percent for country and 44 percent for everybody. Almost 56 percent of the bluegrass audience has already bought a home, while 38 percent own at least one truck, 82 percent own cars, and nearly one in every six has an RV.

What does bluegrass music add to your station? Listeners!

—from a brochure by the International Bluegrass Music Association, Owensboro, Ky.

Used by permission.

want anybody to know how they worked.

But then, it suddenly reached the point where there were so many people wanting to learn, it became possible for the musicians who had skill to start selling it. Now it's a big business, and it's a part of it all, so that as the level of expertise goes up, then the professionals start marketing their skill—you know, "I made this at home, and you can make it too," this sort of do-it-yourself aspect of it which has been part of the folk song revival as well.

TS: Bluegrass was very important in the early stages of the folksong revival in Washington, D.C. D.C. was a perfect place for bluegrass to take root because you have a lot of government people there with money. It's mainly an urban situation, and there are also elements of Southern culture.

NR: That's right—a real meeting there. What I noticed when I met some of those people who were really involved in that early scene, like John Duffey (now the mandolinist for supergroup The Seldom Scene), and Pete Kuykendall and a bunch of others who were around at the time, like Mike Seeger and that whole crowd—they all met each other in the context of school and school friends. I think John Duffey and Peggy Seeger were classmates at one point. For a lot of those kids, there was the radio and these programs from little stations or not so little stations in Arlington and Silver Springs that were broadcasting bluegrass to Appalachian immigrants.

TS: Like Don Owens, a DJ at WARL in Arlington?

NR: Yeah. There was Don Owens, who was kind of the major figure, and then there were some others—Tom Reeder and Pete Kuykendall, who later became the editor of *Bluegrass Unlimited* (the trade magazine of bluegrass), was a DJ at that point too. So they were the focus for a scene that just brought people in who might otherwise not have heard this music. And, of course, to me it seems very similar to the scene that I remember from the San Francisco Bay area, where as high school and junior high school students, we were listening to black radio stations that were aimed at all-black listening audiences of adults. And here were these white teenagers listening to this Southern black rhythm and blues music.

The band in Washington that really spanned the gap and played the most college coffeehouse concerts were the Country Gentlemen, and they were among the first to start picking up their repertoire not just from old folk songs, but from people like Bob Dylan, Tom Paxton and the singer/songwriters that came out of the folk song revival. So that made them more accessible to younger listeners, and they were very consciously attempting to reach the same people who liked the Kingston Trio.

TS: How is bluegrass different today from 40 years ago?

NR: Well, for one thing, it's more professionalized. You've got this trade association, the IBMA, which has made it possible to professionalize even more. It's happening at different levels. People are much more in touch with each other in various ways, with booking agents and record companies which are much more sophisticated than they used to be. The whole business of gender in the music seems to be really important. At least 50 per cent of the up and coming big stars are women at this point, and that's a real change for a music that was pretty much a male preserve. There are also sub-genres now, especially in the religious area. There's always been a religious component, but now you've got a lot of bands that just play gospel, and I think that reflects the fact of considerable involvement in religion these days. A kind of religious revival has been going on for the last decade. It started, I guess in the 1970s with young people.

TS: Well, I guess a lot of these are manifestations of changes in mainstream American society.

NR: Exactly. Bluegrass is changing that way. I think you see a sort of oscillation in the music between progressive and conservative forms. Another thing to remember is that those early years of the festivals, when the music was really becoming popular, corresponded with the years of the Vietnam War and was a time of conflict and searching for values. And the festivals were for a lot of people an escape and also a way to reaffirm things that they approved of. Today they appeal to people who feel nostalgic about those times--as well as the earlier times to which the music frequently refers--and to many others for whom following the music through the festival events is a way of spending leisure time socializing.

Tim Stafford plays guitar for Rounder recording artists Alison Krauss and Union Station, and is a research associate for the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University.

Bury Me Under a Sidewalk

The Appalachian Way of Death in the Cities

Phillip J. Obermiller and Ray Rappold

When sociologist Phillip Obermiller and geographer Ray Rappold investigated burial customs of Appalachians in Cincinnati, they hoped to find out if moving away from the region had affected loyalty. Did Appalachians wish to be buried back in the mountains, or were they satisfied if a city cemetery provided their final resting place? The authors expected to find an attachment to the mountains, that many migrants would want their remains returned to their homeplaces. But what they discovered forced them to draw other conclusions.

Cemeteries in churchyards or near roads in Appalachia show signs of frequent visitation with many displays of flowers, wreaths and flags. A fenced family graveyard high on a mountainside is still a familiar sight across the region. These well-tended cemeteries can be seen as symbols of the strong sense of place often attributed to Appalachians.

However, the mass migrations from the region in the past 50 years have radically changed that sense of place. Although many Appalachian migrants think fondly about their place of origin, they have transferred their feeling of home to their new neighborhoods and communities.

We thought we could track this changing sense of place best by finding out if Appalachian migrants wanted to return to their place of origin for burial or if they were satisfied for their remains to be buried in city cemeteries. This we accomplished by looking at burial patterns among those who died outside of Appalachia: we read nearly 4,500 obituaries, reviewed more than 1,000 death certificates and interviewed funeral directors in two Ohio cities with large urban Appalachian populations.

No state or county in the nation keeps records on how many people are returned for burial. But according to the obituaries in *The Charleston Gazette,* the newspaper of West Virginia's capital city, about half of the people who died out of state were being returned for burial. This figure is misleading, however. Most out-of-state families who do not return relatives for burial have little or no incentive to notify the newspapers in the region. Hence, the true proportion of returns is much smaller than the one-in-two ratio suggested by the obituaries.

We turned for information to commercial livery firms that specialize in carrying human remains. The transportation of bodies over long distances became practical earlier in this century with the advent of modern embalming techniques and express trains. In *The American Way of Death,* Jessica Mitford estimates that 10 percent of all funerals in the United States involve this type of long-distance removal.

One livery firm is the C&C Mortuary Service, located in Covington, Ky. Operated by a father-and-son team who migrated to the area from the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, C&C provides transport services for many of the funeral homes in greater Cincinnati. Nearly one-third of the 1,077 out-of-state burials from greater Cincinnati over the five-year period we checked took place in the Appalachian region. Most of these remains went to Eastern Kentucky for burial in family graveyards.

Neither the obituaries from newspapers nor information from the livery service could tell us what proportion of all Appalachians who die are returned to the mountains for burial. But it did begin to explain why many people in the region think that returns are the rule rather than the exception. Residents of Appalachia frequently know only about those who "come home," but lack direct information about those who stay away. We needed more information, so we interviewed funeral directors who serve urban Appalachian communities.

We chose two small cities in Southwest Ohio with large proportions of Appalachians: Middletown, population 43,719, and Hamilton, population 63,189. Unofficial estimates place the Appalachian migrant population in both cities at about 60 percent.

The funeral directors we interviewed

provided an important insight: in most cases returning a body to the Appalachian region is less expensive than local interment. The average cost of returning a body from Cincinnati to a family-owned plot in Eastern Kentucky (including burial) is about $300. In the Middletown area, similar costs for burial, not including the plot, average $715.

The information from funeral directors provided what we considered the most accurate assessment of Appalachians' returns to their home region after death. The directors estimated from their own experience that just one Appalachian migrant in 10 is returned to the region for burial. This is the same as Mitford's estimate for the U. S. population as a whole. They also said that perhaps half of the deceased who were sent back were not true migrants but had come to the city to receive care from their families. Therefore, this 10 percent estimate should be reduced by half because the frail elderly, who may have lived all but the last few months of their lives in the Appalachian region, never had the opportunity to redefine "home" in the same way as long-term migrants.

Migrants may not be returned to the region for burial in any meaningful numbers, but they have not lost their Appalachian identity. Wherever the burial takes place, Appalachians' consistent adherence to particular funeral customs make them easily identifiable as a distinctive cultural group.

Like Jews, African-Americans, Italians and members of other ethnic minorities, Appalachian families take their trade to specific funeral homes. They do so because these firms are familiar with the funeral customs of the people they serve and are willing to meet their special requirements.

For instance, many Appalachian blue-collar workers in Hamilton have union contracts that allow up to three days paid leave of absence for the death of a family member. The funeral home serving Appalachians in Hamilton routinely distributes specially printed cards that provide employers with the information required to activate the leave of absence.

Our informants also reported that Appalachians prefer long visiting hours, beginning at the time of death when the undertaker may be delayed in removing the body until all family members have gathered to pay their respects. Another characteristic is an almost complete avoidance of practices that are increasingly commonplace in the general population, such as autopsies to ascertain cause of death, harvesting the body for usable organs, donating the body for medical research and cremation.

Another important aspect of Appalachian funeral services is the role of religion. One preacher and sometimes two will conduct a funeral service lasting up to three hours. The funeral directors observe that the preachers, beyond their spiritual dimension, are highly skilled in assisting bereaved families to face and release their grief. One informant noted that Appalachians, with the help of their clergy, are particularly good at working through the grief process.

Floral tributes are regarded as an important part of an urban Appalachian funeral. Alternatives such as making donations to a favorite charity in lieu of sending flowers are usually not offered. Typical floral arrangements at an urban Appalachian funeral may include a wheel with one spoke missing or a telephone with the receiver off the hook and the words "Jesus Has Called." Informants also noted customs such as placing family photographs or other meaningful items in the coffin and bringing the deceased person's favorite chair to the funeral home and allowing it to stand symbolically empty.

The funeral is an important social occasion for urban Appalachian families. As news of the death spreads, the funeral director is inundated with calls not only about the hours of visitation, but also about who is expected to attend from out of town. Calling hours at the funeral home provide an opportunity for friends and acquaintances of the family, as well as family members themselves, to visit and catch up on each other's lives. "Marryings and buryings" in the urban Appalachian community generally involve large meals as well. After the services are completed, guests are invited to a meal at home or at a local church, where the visiting continues unabated.

The widespread use of such customs in their new homes shows that these first and second generation emigrants have maintained Appalachian customs. According to the evidence we gathered, it does seem possible to be Appalachian without thinking of the region as home.

Phillip Obermiller is the coordinator of the sociology program at Northern Kentucky University and a member of the research committee of the Urban Appalachian Council in Cincinnati. Ray Rappold is a native West Virginian who teaches in the geography department at Northern Kentucky University.

Photo by Porter A. M. Feathers, Whitesburg, Tenn., 1920s. Courtesy of Dan Crowe.

River City Relatives

Muddy Muskingum River
moved in with Aunt Tessie
as often as mother made
her "she's my sister" visit
in an atmosphere advertising
moldy linoleum, sour plaster
and hand-me-down Zanesville,
never eating or overnighting
with Cousin Delbert who sang
"there's a monkey in the grass
with a finger up its ass"
like it were a bugle call
telling decent folks to leave—
which we did with dignity.
Only rivers take bed and bread
from down-and-outs on bottoms.

—Glenn McKee

*Glenn McKee, of Waterville, Maine, has had poetry in **Appalachian Heritage**, **Back Home in Kentucky** and **Grab-a-Nickel**.*

Photo by
Michael Smith

Hill and Valley

The roads that lead from one
To the other are seldom traveled:
Moss on stones, grass
Between stones, growing tall.
Few wagons pass this way.

It has gone on long enough
For their customs to diverge.
Their dialects differ slightly.
Between hill and valley
There is no intermarriage.

In the hill settlements
They distrust valley folk.
And in the valleys at night
They watch, among the hills
The enemy fires burning.

—J. B. Goodenough

J. B. Goodenough is a Kentucky-born New Englander living now in Pittsburgh. Her collection of poems, ***Milking in November,*** *was published this year by St. Andrews Press in North Carolina.*

Reviews

The Hillbilly Vampire

by Amy Tipton Gray

Rowan Mountain Press
Blacksburg, Va. 1989
$4.00 (paperback)

Robert J. Higgs

The Hillbilly Vampire by Amy Tipton Gray is not a Gothic novel set in Southern Appalachia. Rather it is a remarkable collection of 25 poems which, as the jacket announces, "caricatures the exploitation of the mountain South by ethnologists from the dark belfries of Academia." The author provides a definition of her titular villain in the opening poem, "The Hillbilly Vampire":

Many people
are confused about hillbilly vampires.

They think:
a hillbilly vampire should look like
George Jones in a cape
or Ricky Skaggs with fangs
or Lyle Lovett, period.

They think
the hillbilly part comes first—
the feeder, not the fed upon.

They do not understand
that this
is another outside industry
come down to the hills in the dark
for raw material.

The hillbilly vampire was excoriated by Thomas Wolfe in *The Hills Beyond* but probably never so economically as Gray does in these trenchant lines. The hillbilly vampire trades in blood and money. He is "not stupid" for he understands "it's not easy / to watch your heartblood / beat through those / who have none of their own." He has "a horde of little ghouls / who signed up for his classes and hang on every word / because he was so charming / and gave them easy tests."

Gray's lesson is a painful one for all who profess to be scholars, for vampire blood in varying amounts runs in our veins. We are attracted to whatever is dying or passing from view. Reading these poems, I had the image of a gaunt corpse in work clothes skewered like one of Dracula's victims and under glass in the Smithsonian with the caption beneath, "Appalachian Americanus, 1850-1980," his dialect and stories on display amid other artifacts.

There is inarguably something deadly—literally—in the very concept of preservation, for what is preserved is the bloodless image of the past. Those who seek and suck can only desiccate. Those who try to remember can learn to love. It is the old battle between science and art, the head and the heart. While the two may be symbiotic to a degree, they are not completely in harmony. One seeks to explain and display, the other to show *and* conceal. For in art something is always hidden, a treasure and a mystery to be privately cherished even if publicly shared.

In this regard neither the title of Gray's book nor its jacket does justice to the emotional range of the poems nor to the balance of content. Contrasted with the bloodsucking of the vampire is the metaphor of "the harvested heart." Gray is just as effective in remembering with love as she is in satirizing with outrage. Reaped in her harvest are members of her family in Johnson City, her childhood friends, and a teacher who was not a vampire, not one who preyed but one who inspired her music teacher, "Mrs. Jordan":

Standing before us in your beads and
glasses
your fingernails red, cracked,
enamel scarred by rocket fire,
the only music teacher for all the
grammar schools,
you took no foolishness.

You were relentless, unyielding as a
metronome.
Order and attention
were all you brooked
—and most hated you.

You will never know
what a river you led some of us
across.
We followed you from a white voiceless
desert
through mute waters to a paradise of
sound.

Several of the poems focus on "Aron," an uncle whose "other name was Joe." I deliberately use the word "focus" for what we learn of Aron comes to us in poems framed in time like old photographs. The people in the poems—for they are all richly populated—are defined by relationship, even in death, especially in death, as we learn in "Aron's Grave":

Aron's coffin
does not rest level with the earth.
Flush with the rim of the hole
when buried,
it has risen
as the ground has shifted and settled.
It was the way he wanted it.
He did not want
to outstare the Resurrection
to be the first facing east
to see the last, first sun.
He never joined the church.
When he was killed
his mother's hair fell out
and his father walked for weeks
with one question.
Aron was very clean in his person.
Perhaps that's why
he wouldn't have dirt on him in
death.
Or maybe he was like a child
who always leaves the door open in
case
something is out there in the dark
to catch him while he sleeps.

One poem is even called "The Snapshot" in which time is frozen to show human connections as long as memory lasts.

By harvesting memories the poet does reverence to the people in her poems, a manner sharply at odds with the technique of the vampire who draws out "the heartblood" of the subjects of study. One method sanctifies; the other exploits. One makes the familiar strange, as good art must inevitably do; the other makes mystery banal.

Basically, then, there are two types of poems in this volume, "Zingers" and "Wringers." The "Zingers" zap the exploiters of every stripe. The "Wringers" are those picture poems that wring the heart with stories of types of people we all know—Aron, for example, who "taught band in the coal camps" and "never got warm"—but do not truly appreciate until recollected in tranquility and love. The penetrating insight and wide range of tone and mood in the poems make Amy Tipton Gray a harvester of note among the growing number of poets in Southern Appalachia. The vampires will not prevail without a struggle, to say the least. ⊠

Reviews

Heathen Valley
by Romulus Linney
Produced by
Horizon Theatre Company
Atlanta, Georgia
Spring 1990

Cindy Lutenbacher

We received a brochure from Horizon Theater in Atlanta inviting us to a play about Appalachia, ***Heathen Valley****. The art worried us a bit: an outhouse sorrounded by mountains with lightning bolts left and right. The copy didn't reassure us: "Who can tame the wild people of Heathen Valley? Southern born and bred, Linney unfolds the haunting Appalachian tale of 'the Valley that Forgot God' and the mysteries of its fiery mountain people. Brimming with elemental passions, this is a simple and powerfully moving theatrical journey through wild parts of the mind as well as wild parts of the country. Winner of the National Theater Critics Award for outstanding new play." We wanted to find out what vision of the mountains Atlanta was seeing. Cindy Lutenbacher, who recently completed her Ph.D. thesis in theater for Northwestern University on the Road Company, a community-based professional theater troupein East Tennessee, attended the production for us, and sent this report.*

Stereotypes are curious beasts. On the one hand, stereotypes have some truth to them or, like cliches and truisms, we wouldn't have them. When I examine the literature that I love, I find more than its share of stereotypes, all somehow functioning madly together to become something that moves me, teaches me, transports me to make me love it. On the other hand stereotyping reminds us that the images are too often used in a mode of incarceration, which keeps us all neatly separate one from another and lures us into making the most incredible assumptions about "other folks."

Horizon Theatre's production of *Heathen Valley* is a piece consciously steeped in the stereotyping of mountain people. Written by prolific playwright Romulus Linney and based on his 1962 novel of the same name, *Heathen Valley* is the story of two conflicting visions of people in the mountains and the havoc wreaked by a vision that denies self-determination. The time is mid-19th century when Bishop Ames of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina hears of a community deep in the mountains who "live dreadful primitive lives, debased into savagery," a people who have "forgotten God." The Bishop determines to "find those people and take to them the Word of God." He brings with him William Starns, the mountain-born janitor of his church, and Billy, an orphan at the church's boys' school who is the narrator of *Heathen Valley*.

Starns, born a couple of hollows away from the valley, leads them to the valley where they encounter the community, which includes the other three characters of the play: Harlan (driven mad by spells and charms, once married to his sister until she was murdered in a land dispute and who constantly threatens to murder his daughter because the ghost of his dead sister/wife so instructs), Cora (wild, tough, fighting with Harlan over the daughter she claims is hers, making more children with Harlan and caretaking, later sleeping with, her younger, half-wit brother) and Juba (midwife, preparer of corpses, who also acts as "Old Bertha" who sees to it that bastard babies whom she believes would not have a chance in life anyway do not survive). I reduce these characters to parentheticals because that is precisely what Linney does. He gives us the "primitive" state of this community in nutshells of stereotypes.

The Bishop leaves to raise money for his mission, and Starns becomes his deacon in the community. By meeting the people on their own terms (and as one of them), Starns establishes the church as well as a schoolhouse, clinic and farm. According to the play, life in Heathen Valley perks up considerably, as exemplified by Harlan and Cora, who settle down to become a happily married couple raising children. However, when the Bishop returns some years later, he fears that Starns has allowed the mission to become too centered upon the earthly needs of the people and too accepting of certain behaviors (such as Old Bertha, dancing, and Cora's twice weekly visits with her brother). He decides to impose strictures upon the community such as requiring the children to wear black cassocks and making Sunday ridiculously sacrosanct. The people desert the church, and the Bishop withdraws financial support for all the activities Starns has established. The community falls into ruin as symbolized by Harlan, who loses what grip he had, kills Cora, tries to kill Starns and is himself killed in the process. Starns' "stomach misery" finally kills him as well, and the play closes with narrator Billy offering a note of hope as he reclaims his "mountain family," or the spirit of the people of the mountains.

I had no trouble with the central ethic of the play: when indigenous people (indigenous being a relative term) are forced into the cosmology of the more powerful who disrespect the ways and lives of the first, destruction will be the result. The fact that the population of Native Americans in the United States is one-tenth of what it was when the Europeans encountered this continent is witness enough of that statement.

Nor am I disturbed by Linney's overt, and I believe conscious, use of stereotypes. What bothers me is that he chose to do so little with them. I found almost nothing in the play to suggest a deeper understanding of the lives of the people in the mountains or of the struggle for self-determination. Starns' often repeated "poor folks has poor ways" seemed a fitting summation of Linney's presentation of mountain life.

Horizon Theatre billed the show as a "simple" story, and that it was; the play's

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Contributor's note for review of **Hillbilly Vampire** (page 31):

Robert J. Higgs is a professor of English at East Tennessee State University and a co-editor of a major anthology of Appalachian literature, ***Voices from the Hills****.*

Cindy Lutenbacher teaches English and writing at Morehouse College. She co-wrote and performs in a two-woman show about racism, ***Heart of the Matter****, and has performed in Jo Carson's* ***Daytrips****.*

simplicity was also its danger. The play allowed us to easily comprehend its message, that the hegemony of one culture over another is wrong, without ever broaching the limits of our own visions of people whose ways may not be our own. In my opinion, such a play does nothing to ensure that such destruction will not continue in this culture or others.

Heathen Valley made me long for a play which would require deeper questioning. What is the process by which we muddle through the minefield of stereotype to a place of communication? How do we relinquish the basic cultural/psychological structures which lead us into the destruction of those we dub "other"? What do we do when we are the "other"? How can performance actively engage in these struggles? What is the process through which types come to be? These are not academic questions. They have all to do with the domination and marginalization of people, and if a play is going to willfully participate in such overt stereotypes as those of *Heathen Valley*, these are the kinds of questions I expect it to confront.

I have deep concern over the wisdom of presenting *Heathen Valley* to an urban audience; my fear is that too few of us have had the opportunity to experience much beyond *The Beverly Hillbillies* in what we bring to this particular play. In that instance, *Heathen Valley* can only serve to sustain the very structures which allow and/or cause the decimation of peoples. At the same time, I find it easy to imagine that the play would be offensive to mountain people living the struggle of self-determination, just as a play which utilized but did not *unpack* the image of the Frito Bandito would be offensive to Mexicans, Scarlett O'Hara to Southern white women, or Step-and-Fetch-It to African-Americans.

It is to the credit of the performers, designers and director of Horizon's production that my focus in this brief response is on Linney's play, for if they had not done their job well, I would have left the community center wondering whether the text or the production was too limited. As is, I am left to argue over issues of the presentation of stereotypes.

The Growth of Cities in Appalachia

Richard Blaustein

The Urban South: A History. Lawrence H. Larsen, The University Press of Kentucky, 1990. Lexington, Ky. $23.00 (hardcover)

The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1976: From Tomahawks to TVA. Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, The University of Tennessee Press, 1977. Knoxville, Tenn. $24.95 (hardcover)

Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity and Change in an Appalachian City. Michael J. McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983. Knoxville, Tenn. $28.95 (hardcover) $14.95 (paper)

City Behind A Fence: Oak Ridge, Tennessee 1942-1946. Charles W. Johnson and Charles O. Jackson, The University of Tennessee Press, 1981. Knoxville, Tenn. $24.95 (hardcover) $11.50 (paper)

As Amy Tipton Gray notes in the "Rural Appalachia" (Spring 1990) edition of *Now and Then,* "urban" and "Appalachian" are mutually exclusive in the minds of many people. Yet, like the United States in general, Appalachia is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan. As historian Lawrence H. Larsen demonstrates in *The Urban South: A History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990), the urban thrust of the South is nothing new, but it is only very recently, during the late 1970s, in fact, that the region has begun to overcome its longstanding handicaps and disadvantages. Northern industrialization outstripped that of the South long before the eruption of the Civil War, creating and perpetuating economic marginality and subordination. Like the South as a whole, Appalachia has been overpopulated and undercapitalized for most of its history. According to Larsen, the industrialization which has occurred in the region has never been substantial enough to completely absorb its displaced, superfluous rural labor force. This unfortunate state of affairs has depressed wage levels and discouraged trade unionism and has encouraged Southern rural migration to the urban-industrial North and Midwest.

Originating as frontier forts and trading posts, the major cities of the upland South were products of the aftermath of the War of 1812 and the building of the western railroads. The South quickly recovered from the destruction of its railroads during the Civil War and the exploitation of its coal, ore and timber by outside interests was well underway by the 1880s. The next decade saw great growth in the textile industry financed by Northern capital in towns like Asheville, Knoxville and Roanoke. As displaced country dwellers adjusted to life in crowded coal camps and grimy mill towns, local color writers and industrial promoters alike extolled the heroic virtues of the region's conservative, independent-minded Anglo-Saxons who, as Larsen puts it, "hated unions, abhorred governmental interference, obeyed employers, and worked cheap," this at a time when trade unionism, socialism and syndical-anarchism were making serious inroads among the polyglot, largely foreign-born workers of the north and west. As the coalfield wars and textile strikes of the following century were to demonstrate, white southern workers were not totally immune to the appeal of these revolutionary doctrines. However, these movements could not offset the inexorable pressures of a superabundant labor force and a subordinate regional economy.

Larsen's study provides a useful and thought-provoking overview of broad developmental trends, but for specific details concerning urbanization in Appalachia and the South in general, one must turn to case studies. Margaret Ripley Wolfe's exemplary *Kingsport, Tennessee: A Planned American City* (University Press of Kentucky, 1987), reviewed by Edward L. Ayers in the Spring 1988 issue of *Now and Then,* sets a high standard for historical studies of

urban-industrial growth in the region. Though written in a somewhat florid and occasionally heavy-handed style, *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1976: From Tomahawks To TVA* by Gilbert E. Govan and James E. Livingood (University of Tennessee Press, 1977, 3rd edition) will nonetheless be valuable to the reader interested in fleshing out Larsen's theories of Southern urban-industrial development. Growing up around a frontier trading post established by James McDonald, a Scottish merchant from Inverness, Chattanooga became the major port between Knoxville and Muscle Shoals and one of the South's most important rail terminals by the time of the Civil War. The fall of Chattanooga to Union forces in 1863 severed the southern rail network and thereby helped to insure the downfall of the Confederacy. A disciple of the New South movement promulgated by Atlanta's Henry Grady, which sought to revitalize the South through an infusion of northern capital, Adolph Ochs, founder of *The Chattanooga Times* and later owner of the *New York Times,* played a highly visible role in promoting industrial development in Chattanooga and its environs. Though Chattanooga developed a substantial iron and steel industry, it was ultimately unable to compete with the massive industrial complexes which emerged in what we now have come to call the rust belt, relying instead on diversified light industry which took advantage of its abundant labor force, the spillover of the southern rural hinterlands.

Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity And Change In An Appalachian City by Michael J. McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler (University of Tennessee Press, 1983) addresses the impact of industrialization on Knoxville from the end of the Civil War until the early 1980s. The major thesis of this work is that political conflict between a progressive commercial establishment and a conservative displaced rural working force resulted in decades of stunted development. Industrial growth in Knoxville boomed during the latter part of the nineteenth century, only to stall during the Great Depression. The war years brought some economic relief, but even the growth prompted by TVA and Oak Ridge could not keep pace with the influx of black and white former country dwellers and the continuing deterioration of Knoxville's center city, a pattern which persisted through the 1960s. Today, Knoxville is still trying to overcome its reputation as a "grimy little city."

In marked contrast to Knoxville and Chattanooga, which began as classical frontier settlements, Oak Ridge is a modern phenomenon, a totally planned community which was established to support America's wartime nuclear development program. The Oak Ridge site was chosen because of its isolation and relative security, cheap land prices and low labor costs and also its easy access to TVA electricity. As Charles W. Johnson and Charles O. Jackson report in *City Behind A Fence: Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1942-46* (University of Tennessee Press, 1981), nearly a thousand families were dispossessed in the acquisition of the Oak Ridge site, some of whom had already been displaced by other federal projects; county governments lost tax revenues as well as roads and bridges to the federal reservation. The population of Oak Ridge reached 75,000 at its peak, and wartime shortages of housing and consumer goods heightened tensions between the newcomers and the surrounding local communities. Oak Ridge became an island of cosmopolitanism in a sea of rustic conservatism, and this sense of separation between Oak Ridgers and their neighbors persisted through the 1960s. Today Oak Ridge and Knoxville have been linked through the state of Tennessee's ambitious Science Corridor program which hopes to rival North Carolina's Research Triangle, and Southern Appalachia has become one of America's primary centers of nuclear and space technology. However, as long as cheap labor and low taxes characterize the region's industrial climate, Appalachia will continue to be politically and economically subordinate to external interests.

Richard Blaustein directs the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University.

A Highlander's History

She looks at the room of a house.
Studies one corner.
Meditates on the other three,
exactly the same,

yet different. She looks at the whole
of an ocean. Memorizes
one wave. Thinks of where it has
been and where it is

going. She sucks on the empty straw
of a soda. Notes that
the counter is dirty, that the age and
wage of the waitress

is an economic injustice. She observes
a diamond, how it gleams
in a storefront window. Remembers
she's old, ugly, unwanted,

and living in a one-room apartment
on Venice Beach
off the Pacific Ocean.
She's tried to get a job for months
and now

she's starving

—Llewellyn McKernan

Llewellyn McKernan is a poet and children's book writer. ***Short and Simple Annals****, her chapbook of poems about Appalachia, was published in 1979. Her children's books include* ***More Songs of Gladness*** *and* ***Bird Alphabet.***

Country Comes to Town

A Survey of Urban Appalachian Literature

by Danny L. Miller

Fiction about Appalachian migrants is a genre with a long history. As early as the 1870s, the Appalachian people became subjects for local colorists with stories that dealt with Appalachians leaving the mountains for the more "civilized" and cultured cities and towns of the lowlands.

In fact, this literary genre is so well established that it is replete with recurring themes: the city is corrupt and corrupts; the city is a place of opportunities for advancement; the mountaineers lose touch with nature and all the positive things it stands for when they move to the city; the mountaineers struggle with prejudice against the "hillbillies" by the city dwellers.

There is, not surprisingly, an ambiguity involved in the experience of the Appalachian migrant. On the one hand, there is the sense that the mountaineers lose touch with themselves, their values, those things which have made them noble, by leaving the mountains. On the other hand, there is implied a desire to escape, which suggests that the mountain world limits them, and the city offers many opportunities.

It was in the works of Mary Noailles Murfree during the local color period in literature following the Civil War that the mountain people first gained full stature as literary characters. In "Drifting Down Lost Creek" (first in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1884 and then in her collection *In the Tennessee Mountains*), Murfree depicted one of the first Appalachian migrants. Vander Price, the story's hero, who has saved his retarded brother's life by confessing to a crime which the brother committed, is sent to prison. But while in prison, Vander is able to pursue the occupation of ironworking which he has only dreamed of in the mountains. When he is released from prison, he stays in town where he can continue his metal work. He marries a town woman.

As perhaps the prototype of the Appalachian migrant, Vander changes dramatically from the man he was in the mountains: "His ambitions were still hot within him, but they were worldly ambitions now. ...He had changed greatly: He had become nervous, anxious, concentrated...."

Murfree describes Vander's return to the mountains after 10 years in the "outside world": "[H]e often turned and surveyed the vast landscape with a hard, callous glance of worldly utility. He saw only weather signs. The language of the mountains had become a dead language." Vander has wanted to escape from the mountains, but as Murfree suggests, he has lost much in the process. Vander's worldliness is implicitly negative. Thus, even in one of the earliest works in which an Appalachian moves to the city there is the implicit theme of the city's power to rob people of a part of their humanity.

. . . the contrast between country and city shows the virtues and values of the country people to be superior to those of the city, where materialism, snobbery and corruption are frequently the rule.

Frances Hodgson Burnett, author of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *The Little Prince*, the classic children's books set in her native England, also wrote stories set in Appalachia. (She had moved to Knoxville, Tenn., in 1863 at the age of 14.) Lodusky Dunbar in Burnett's *Lodusky* is someone for whom the move to the city is positive. "Dusk" is a beautiful temptress from the North Carolina mountains near Asheville whose greatest desire is to get out of the mountains: "I've allers wanted to go away," she says. "I—I've allers said I would. I want to go to a city somewhar...." Paul Lennox, a sophisticated artist, breaks his engagement to Rebecca Noble and promises to take Lodusky away. Eventually, however, he realizes that he has merely been seduced by Lodusky's beauty. He leaves the mountains without her but with her threat that he will see her again. Two years later, in Paris, Lennox sees Lodusky as she makes a stunning entrance at the Opera House. She has escaped.

These themes were continued in several novels in the early decades of the 20th century in which mountain people leave the mountains and move to towns and cities where they are "civilized" by their contact with the more cultured outside world. In John Fox, Jr.'s, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, published in 1908, for example, the mountain girl June Tolliver leaves the mountains in order to become "cultured" enough to marry the outsider Jack Hale. Later, June even goes to New York. Ironically (in a twist on the stereotypical plot of this nature), when June returns to the mountains she appears more sophisticated than Jack, but they eventually are married.

In almost all of these early works, the contrast between country and city shows the virtues and values of the country people to be superior to those of the city, where materialism, snobbery and corruption are frequently the rule.

The city's power to destroy something in the mountaineers is likewise depicted in the proletarian novels of the

1930s, perhaps the first works that could really be designated urban Appalachian. In these novels, mountain people leave the mountains and go to lowland towns where they join the poorest ranks of working people. Among these novels are Grace Lumpkin's *To Make My Bread* (1932), Sherwood Anderson's *Kit Brandon* (1936), and Olive Tilford Dargan's *Call Home the Heart* (1932) and *A Stone Came Rolling* (1935).

In Lumpkin's *To Make My Bread*, the McClure family, driven from their lands by lumber companies entering the Southern mountains of North Carolina, go to the Piedmont textile town of Leesville (Gastonia). The novel shows the disintegration of the family as a result of their exploitation by the textile industry.

Gastonia, N.C., (this time called Winbury) is also the setting for Dargan's *Call Home the Heart*, a Marxist novel of social propaganda. These novels describe the experience of the Appalachian as migrant who, as Cratis Williams, the preeminent Appalachian scholar, says, is depicted as either "an angry worker protesting against exploitation by greedy capitalists, or a poor white either sinking into awful degradation or poisoning the gentle society into which he has sneaked." Williams concludes that these books (he also includes Dubose Heyward's *Angel*, Fox's *The Heart of the Hills* and Arnow's *The Dollmaker*) should be "on the list of required reading for the social worker who seeks to understand the problems of the mountain migrants in adjusting to civilization in contemporary America."

It was not until the 1940s that the urban Appalachian experience as we recognize it today began. It was during this time, and actually for several years during the Depression and before World War II, that the country experienced the great migration of Appalachians from the mountains to the large industrial cities of the North and Midwest, where they encountered the modern problems often written about by sociologists and historians.

One of the first novels—if not *the* first—to describe this urban Appalachian experience is Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker* (1954). *The Dollmaker* focuses on the Nevels family and their move from the rural Kentucky hills to Detroit during World War II. Over two-thirds of the novel concerns the experiences of the newly-arrived "immigrant" family as they struggle to adjust to life in the city and as they relinquish their hopes of returning home. Clovis Nevels and two of his children, Clytie and Enoch, are quickly assimilated, learn how to use the newfangled appliances, how to buy on time, how to beat the system. Perhaps symbolically, Clytie and Enoch become avid fans of the radio, its soap operas and *The Lone Ranger*. Reuben, the oldest son, cannot adjust and runs away back home to Kentucky, feeling betrayed most of all by his mother whom he sees as having given up her dreams. Cassie, the youngest daughter, is a victim of the city; she is killed when her legs are severed by a train.

Gertie, the wife and mother, has a much harder time adjusting than her husband and two younger children. Perhaps Gertie never does adjust, although in the novel's climactic scene she prepares to help her family survive in the city by making and selling wood carvings while Clovis is out of work. The novel's ending is ambiguous and has been variously interpreted by critics. Some see Gertie's splitting up of her masterful wood carving to make small carvings as the defeat of her dreams and artistic aspirations, while others see it as a victory and a triumph of spirit which could have only occurred in the urban setting. In an interview in *Melus* in 1982 (Summer, 1982), Harriette Arnow herself suggested the positive ending of the novel and the city's salutary influence on Gertie:

> You see, at home, Gertie loved the land, wanted a farm, and she could do the work and wanted to stay there, but she was not exactly accepted there, especially by her mother....But when she reached the alley in Detroit, she found all manner of people. She herself might be called "hillbilly" and the children might fight, but they all fought—but she became part of the conglomeration of people and in a sense she was more at home—I say only in a sense—she knew more kindness from her neighbors when she was in trouble....

"I grew up within hearing of train and steamboat whistles, and most of the time I looked toward the world of which they spoke—Nashville, Cincinnati, Detroit, Louisville, Chicago. . .

Gertie's ambivalence about the city may reflect Arnow's own attitude. She has stated of herself: "I grew up within hearing of train and steamboat whistles (at Burnside, Ky.), and most of the time I looked toward the world of which they spoke—Nashville, Cincinnati, Detroit, Louisville, Chicago. That world had taken most of my people and would I knew in time take me; it offered most" (*Mountain Path* Introduction, 1963). Thus, although Arnow paints the positive aspects of the country and the negative aspects of the city in *The Dollmaker*, she also shows the negative aspects of country life (not enough work to support a family, not being close enough to medical attention, the strictures of narrow-minded fundamentalist religion) and the positive aspects of city life, specifically the involvement in the larger community.

The Dollmaker is based in part on Harriette Arnow's own experiences. A native of the hill country of east-central Kentucky, she had lived in Cincinnati from 1934 through 1939 and was well aware of the lure which the city held for struggling men in the hills during the Depression and later beginnings of World War II. She and her husband Harold and their children had themselves lived in a housing project in Detroit during the War. Harriette Arnow was indeed the chief

interpreter of the Appalachian immigrant experience.

In later years, beginning in the mid-1960s, many novels centered on the assimilated migrants, not the immigrants, but their children who were born and reared in the city. In many of these works, as in most ethnic literature dealing with the second and third generations of immigrants (such as Chicano or Asian-American literature), the question of identity becomes of major importance, as well as one's relationship to the traditional culture—pride or shame in one's past.

Ruth Wolff's novel focusing on second-generation urban Appalachians, *A Crack in the Sidewalk* (1965), is the story of Linsey Templeton, 13 at the beginning of the novel, who has to grow up and learn about life. The Templetons have come from the eastern portion of the state to Brockton, Ky., (actually Covington or Newport), just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. Linsey and her parents and five brothers and sisters live over a feed store near the railroad tracks. Linsey and her older sister Kevy, on whom the novel focuses, are so much a part of the urban world around them, with its restaurants, stores and high school that when they return to Eastern Kentucky to visit their grandmother, the mountain world seems strange and alien to them.

Even though they have assimilated into their city environment, many qualities of Appalachian life and values of Appalachians are retained by the Templetons: the father's extreme conservatism and fundamentalist religiosity which prompts him to deny the family a television set; the family's accepting attitude toward the mentally handicapped little brother Pleas; and her father and Linsey's love of music, for example.

Linsey is confronted with the choice of two boyfriends, one from the upper class, the other closer to her own social status (this sounds somewhat similar to the plot of the movie *Fresh Horses* which was recently filmed in Covington and Cincinnati with Molly Ringwald playing the Kentucky hillbilly girl and Andrew McCarthy the upper class Cincinnatian). As a result of its sentimentality and focus on a teenage girl, *A Crack in the Sidewalk* is sometimes seen as a young adult book. As a novel of the urban Appalachian experience, Linsey's struggle is one of identity and coming to terms with her background.

Gurney Norman shows the migratory experience in his stories in *Kinfolks* (1977). In "Home for the Weekend," for example, the Collier clan gathers at Grandma Collier's in Eastern Kentucky on Memorial Day. They come from all over: Junior from Cincinnati, Jenny from North Carolina, Evelyn and L.C. from Perry County, and the young nephew Wilgus from college in Lexington. Though they have left their mountain home, these migrants—some to the city—still come back, even though once there they fight like cats and dogs over the least things.

". . .That world had taken most of my people and would, I knew, in time take me; it offered most"

In the hilarious *Divine Right's Trip* (1971), Norman tells the quintessential story of a 60s "acid freak" who goes back home. The novel follows D.R. (David Ray, also known as Divine Right) Davenport across the country from California to Eastern Kentucky. Part of the book is set in Cincinnati where D.R. had lived for 10 years and where his sister Marcella and brother-in-law Doyle (a mechanic) now live in a middle-class suburb. The picture of Marcella and Doyle's life contrasts markedly with D.R.'s They have settled down into middle-class life, while he is a "truth-seeking freak." Doyle has joined the church, says prayers at the table, takes their two children to Sunday School and works at a service station to support his family. Marcella and D.R. reminisce about "back home" and their Uncle Emmit who is dying. This prompts D.R. to head into the mountains, where he decides to stay and raise rabbits.

Michael Henson, who has lived in Cincinnati since 1965, writes with Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine as the setting. *Ransack* (1980) is the story of Seth, a restless, out-of-work man who just "wants to be left alone" so that he can figure his life out. The son of Appalachian migrants to Cincinnati, Seth has traveled a great deal. Returning at the beginning of the novel to Cincinnati, the only place where he ever felt good, he becomes involved with a group of men who demolish houses for a living. As the crew ransacks the houses they are readying for demolition, Seth ransacks himself for his identity. By the end of the novel, Seth seems to be working toward self-discovery. *Ransack* depicts inner-city violence, police brutality, pessimism, prejudice and nostalgia for the mountains.

A different kind of urban Appalachian experience is described by Wilma Dykeman. The main character of her *Return the Innocent Earth* (1973) is the highly urbanized business executive Jon Clayburn, whose grandparents were of the planter class in the North Carolina mountains. The Clayburn family has risen through hard work and determination to control a successful canning company. Along the way, it seems, some of the second and third generation Clayburns, who now control the canning business, especially Jon's cousin Stull, have lost touch with the earth, with their past and the virtues of their fathers and grandparents who built the company. The novel focuses on Jon's search to reestablish that connection. The Appalachian mountaineers who have been the forebears of these men and women, these city folks with their fancy cars, swimming pools, estates and modern business problems, had the experience of economic success in the urban world, unlike that of most of the people in Henson's works.

Carol J. Scott's *Kentucky Daughter* (1985) is in the tradition of Fox's *The Heart of the Hills*, in which two young people leave Eastern Kentucky for an education in the "Blue-grass" section of the state. In this young adult novel, Mary Fred Pratley leaves the Kentucky mountains to go to school. Mary Fred's father David has been killed in a mine disaster

and her mother Becky has been left a widow with four children. Mary Fred decides to better herself and help the family by getting better schooling in the city. She goes to live with her aunt and uncle in Hampton, Va. At Hampton Junior High School Mary Fred struggles against snobbishness and prejudice. Mary Fred is made fun of and at first feels very ashamed of her Kentucky background. She is especially ashamed of the brightly-colored coat her mother has woven for her (Becky Pratley is depicted as a talented mountain artist who weaves, carves and makes cornshuck dolls).

Eventually, however, and expectedly, Mary Fred learns the real value of her background and to take pride in her heritage and her family. Mary Fred becomes more accepted at school when she stops feeling ashamed, joins the newspaper staff, makes new friends. The novel ends on a note of promise and the affirmation of the Appalachian cultural background.

Appalachians who leave their mountain homes and find new lives in the city have been depicted in literature for over a hundred years now, beginning with the local color writers. Harriette Arnow's classic American novel, which ranks with such works as Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, Cather's *My Antonia*, and Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, is the quintessential depiction of the Appalachian immigrant experience—the move to the city and the difficulties the newcomers experience in trying to fit in with their new surroundings and yet retain the values, beliefs and heritage of their Appalachian culture. But almost 50 years have passed since Arnow told the poignant and often tragic story of the Nevels family's move from Kentucky to Detroit. More recent fiction has dealt with second and third-generation Appalachians in the city and the struggles they face in knowing who they are—coming to terms with their cultural heritage.

It isn't always easy to be an Appalachian in the city, where there have been and still are many prejudices against "hillbillies." It is easy to see how shame and embarrassment at their different origins cause many mountain people in the city to deny their past as they try to assimilate. It is only through heightened cultural awareness and awakened pride in their roots that many urban Appalachians learn to celebrate their "Appalachian-ness."

In *The Invisible Minority: Urban Appalachians* (1981) William W. Philliber estimated that since 1950 over three million people have left the coves and hollows of the Appalachian region to find new opportunities in the metropolitan cities of the North, Midwest and South, and thousands more came before 1950. Many of these migrants now have children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren who, along with their migrant forebears, constitute a large percentage of the populations of these large cities (recent census figures for Cincinnati, for example, show that about 40 percent of the city's population is of Appalachian origin). The novels and stories surveyed in this article—and there are many others—deal with the dreams and hopes, the struggles for identity and pride in one's heritage, and the triumphs of these urban Appalachians.

Danny Miller is assistant professor of English at Northern Kentucky University, specializing in Kentucky and Appalachian literature and is involved in several urban Appalachian organizations.

On the Move in Appalachian Children's Fiction

Roberta Herrin

***Now and Then** asked Roberta Herrin, the director of the Journey Through Fantasy Literature, a National Endowment for the Humanities workshop at East Tennessee State University and an expert on Appalachian children's literature, to tell us about books for children that show the effects of urban life in the region. She found some common themes in the recent literature.*

Moving From Rural Appalachia To Urban Areas

One of the most common themes in Appalachian children's fiction is the migration from rural areas to urban centers—usually *Northern* urban centers. Such moves pose the usual problems that accompany assimilation into any unfamiliar culture—overcoming language differences, making friends, adjusting to new schools. In many of the novels, the migration is permanent (*Neva's Patchwork Pillow*); in others, the characters cannot adjust to large urban areas like Chicago, Cincinnati or Detroit and go back home (*Mimosa Tree*). Often the characters briefly visit urban areas and are so confused by elevators, automobiles, traffic lights and skyscrapers that they might well be visiting another planet (*Fair Annie of Old Mule Hollow*). And sometimes—though rarely—the characters struggle but then happily adjust to life in a large town like Chicago (*Good-By to Stony Crick*).

Borland, Kathryn, and Helen Speicher. *Good-By to Stony Crick*: New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975. Jeremy Weatherhead has difficulty adjusting to the move from Stony Crick to Chicago.

Byars, Betsy. *After the Goat Man.* New York: Viking, 1974. Figgy and his grandfather are forced to move from their cabin to a "concrete block house" built for families who are displaced to the city by a new superhighway.

Cleaver, Vera, and Bill Cleaver. *Mimosa Tree.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1977. Marvella Proffitt moves with her family from Goose Elk, N.C., to a Chicago apartment where they are faced with such an impossible life that they return to their North Carolina farm.

Crook, Beverly Courtney. *Fair Annie of Old Mule Hollow.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978. Fair Annie Collins briefly visits Burlsville, a town 20 miles away from her mountain home, where she sees for the first time an elevator and a six-story building.

Hamilton, Dorothy. *Neva's Patchwork Pillow*. Scotdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1975. Neva finds the adjustment difficult when she moves from Lost Creek, Ky., to Cincinnati.

Lawrence, Mildred. *Walk a Rocky Road*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1971. Silvy Kershaw, who lives in a remote Appalachian hollow, gets a college scholarship and is forced to deal with city dwellers and urban life.

Lyon, George Ella. *Borrowed Children*. New York: Orchard, 1988. When Mandy Perritt travels from Goose Rock, Ky., to Memphis, Tenn., and back home, she learns to appreciate home by having been away from it.

Moving From Urban Areas To Rural Appalachia

Books in this category are just as plentiful as books about moving *from* Appalachia. Often the main character is forced by some unhappy circumstance to move from a large city to a rural area (*Big Blue Island*), and usually the move is met with resistance—*Midnight Fox* and *A Peaceable Warrior*. Ironically, city dwellers usually adjust to a rural setting more easily and happily than rural Appalachians adjust to city life. The moves to rural areas are depicted more positively than moves to urban areas. In these books, the country life is almost always romanticized, as in *John Henry McCoy* and *Bridge to Terabithia* where a family relocates from Arlington to rural Virginia and gives up such amenities as television in an effort to teach their young daughter the "right" values.

Byars, Betsy. *The Midnight Fox*. New York: Viking, 1968. Ten-year-old Tommy is sent—with great resistance—to Aunt Millie's farm while his parents bicycle through Europe for two months.

Cannon, Bettie. *A Bellsong for Sarah Raines*. New York: Scribner's, 1987. When Sarah Raines' father commits suicide in Detroit, she is forced to move back to her relatives in rural Eastern Kentucky.

Chaffin, Lillie. *John Henry McCoy*. New York: Macmillan, 1971. Ten-year-old John Henry McCoy has moved back and forth between country and city—Chicago, Cincinnati, Akron, Columbus—and now he wants to settle permanently in the country.

Curry, Jane Louise. *The Watchers*. New York: Atheneum, 1975. Ray Siler, a "problem child," is sent from Apple Lock to live with relatives in Withers County, W.Va.

Gage, Wilson. *Big Blue Island*. New York: Collins, 1964. When 11-year-old Darrell is orphaned, the Detroit welfare authorities send him to Tennessee to live with his great uncle on an island in the Tennessee River.

Kassem, Lou. *Listen for Rachel*. New York: Atheneum, 1986. Set during the Civil War, this is the story of Rachel Sutton whose grandfather moves her to Carder's Cove in the Watauga Settlement in East Tennessee after her parents die in a fire in Nashville.

Lee, Mildred. *The People Therein*. Boston: Houghton/Clarion, 1980. Drew Thorndike, a botanist, moves from Boston to the North Carolina mountains near Asheville.

Murray, Marguerite. *A Peaceable Warrior*. New York: Atheneum, 1986. A 12-year-old boy must spend the summer in the Western North Carolina mountains.

Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia*. New York: Macmillan, 1977. Leslie Burke's parents are "reassessing their value structure," and so they move from suburban Arlington to Lark Creek, Va.

Raymond, Charles. *Jud*. Boston: Houghton, 1968. Feeling that his son is spoiled by city life, Jud's father moves him to the Great Smoky Mountains.

Smith, Doris Buchanan. *Return to Bitter Creek*. New York: Viking, 1986. Lacey and Campbell, her mother, move from the Colorado Rockies back to Bitter Creek, N.C., with Campbell's live-in boyfriend, David.

Large and Small Urban Settings in Appalachia

These are books about which readers often remark, "I don't see anything Appalachian in it. This story could take place in any town in the United States." What readers are responding to is the absence of folkways and stereotypes which they have come to identify with Appalachia. Though set in the region, these books are often free of the ballad-singing, quilt-making, dulcimer-playing, corn-planting characters that pervade Appalachian fiction set in rural areas. Writers such as Cynthia Rylant and Jenny Davis maintain a view of Appalachia that is definitely 20th century. Microwave ovens, satellite dishes, polyester fabrics, shopping malls—the realities of industrialized areas give these books stark realism.

Curry, Jane Louise. *The Daybreakers*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1970. Callie Rivers discovers a new world—and a new dimension—when she moves from Daingerfield, Texas, to Apple Lock, W.Va.

Davis, Jenny. *Goodbye and Keep Cold*. New York: Orchard, 1987. Though set in Cauley's Creek, Ky., this novel depicts adults who have college educations and have lived in Lexington and Pikeville.

Green, Connie Jordon. *The War at Home*. New York: Macmillan, 1989. The story of two cousins, set in Oak Ridge, Tenn., near the end of World War II.

Hallman, Ruth. *Tough is not Enough*. Louisville: Westminister Press, 1981. This book focuses on a romance between an Appalachian "mountain" girl and an Appalachian "city" boy.

Lorenzo, Carol Lee. *Heart of Snowbird*. New York: Harper, 1975. Twelve-year-old Laurel Ivy rebels against prejudice when a Cherokee Indian family moves into Snowbird Gap.

Rylant, Cynthia. *A Blue-Eyed Daisy*. New York: Bradbury, 1985. Ellie Farley struggles to become 12 in a typical small town community in Monroe County.

—. *A Fine White Dust*. New York: Bradbury, 1986. Pete wrestles with religion in a small, typical North Carolina town.

mountain top and made a pond there, on the stream where my great-grandpa had built his cabin before the Confederate War. It was an expensive camp, with horseback riding, karate classes, dieting and courses in Japanese. From the road I could see only the driveway up the mountain and the horses grazing by the branch.

It was almost eleven. I followed the dirt road to where it joined the paved road to Brevard and turned right toward the hospital. Within two miles the road became a four-lane expressway.

The drive into town astonished me. I had not been back for a couple of years, and in that time a number of office buildings, condominiums, and at least two shopping malls in the contemporary Romanesque style had gone up. The expressway followed the old truck route, and much of the old build-up, the filling stations and hamburger joints, the drive-ins and little plazas, had been closed off or relegated to frontage roads. The real strip was now the access road into town, off the expressway, but it was six lanes and not the crossable free-for-all the old truck route had been. When I was in high school, we cruised the truck route up and down on Friday and Saturday nights, stopping at the King O Burger, Brock's Grill, the A&W, and Hastee Tastee, to see who was out, and who was out with whom.

I took the ramp onto the access highway and followed bumper to bumper traffic into the edge of town. Half the restaurants lining the route were Chinese, Thai and Mexican. But there must have been a dozen banks along the two-mile stretch, all with drive-in windows. I did not recognize a single place. It could have been anywhere in America. It was a thought oddly thrilling and disappointing at once.

The hospital was on the north edge of town, but because of one-way streets I got lost twice and had to ask directions. When I did finally approach the building from the west side I saw it had a whole new wing, higher and longer than the original structure. And there were cranes and scaffolds, trucks and mobile offices where the old parking lot had been. There was no sign directing me to alternate parking.

Looking for a parking space along the street, I circled the block. The visitors' spaces in front of the hospital were all full. When I first got my license and drove Daddy's pickup to town, I was terrified there would be no place to park. I was afraid of panicking, with no place to stop the truck and get out. Several times I drove all the way out of town into the country before I got up the nerve to go back and look for a space. It was like being trapped on stilts and unable to either stop or get off.

There was a parking lot just down the hill by a low brick building. The sign in front said "Radiology Center and Associates" and listed a dozen doctors underneath. The entrance to the parking lot had a striped barrier and a card machine. I pulled into the entrance and reached for the card. But above the slot it said "Insert Parking Permit." It was a parking lot for doctors with special permits. I would have to back out into the street. But a car had already turned in behind me, a black Jaguar that probably belonged to a radiologist or surgeon. I had to roll down my window and gesture to him to back up. But even when he had backed aside the traffic was too heavy for me to get into the street. It took me a minute or two to drive out of there, and the doctor in the Jaguar did not look pleased. Perhaps he had an emergency.

I finally found a space in a commercial parking lot two blocks away and hurried to the hospital. It was already lunch time, and they were probably serving Uncle Forrest his tray of custard, mashed potatoes, casserole and jello.

All hospitals are astonishingly alike. You step through a foyer that could be the entrance to a bank or corporate headquarters, and then by stages enter the medical atmosphere, past a civilian receptionist who smiles and welcomes you, then a desk where a white-haired volunteer tells you which room to go to. Behind that desk will be the admissions office, the release office, the business office, and over to the side a gift shop. Beyond that you enter the real business area of the hospital, with elevators and signs to the X-ray department, Intensive Care, Cardiology. Uncle Forrest was on the third floor in the cardiology unit.

I took the first elevator but had to step back while an orderly pushed a wheelchair on ahead of me. Another orderly followed with a number of bottles and tubes. The woman in the chair, who had only a few strands of white hair on her head, was trying to push the tubes away.

"Stop that," the orderly said. "Now be a good girl."

I decided to let them go on and wait for the next available elevator.

When I got to Uncle Forrest's room he was sitting up with the lunch tray in front of him.

"Ain't nothing in this place fit to eat," he said instead of greeting me. He picked at the broccoli on his plate as if it was poison ivy.

"You're not here to eat good food," I said.

"Their main treatment is starvation," he said. "Who needs to go to a diet clinic? Just bring the lard-assed old ladies to Ewbank Hospital, and they'll lose their fat."

Forrest's gray hair stood on end, and he hadn't shaved in two or three days.

"I can see they're treating you well," I said.

"I'd rather be in the penitentiary," he said. "The food tastes like glue, and they won't even let you get up to pee."

He had a heart monitor like a big locket strung from his neck.

"They don't want you to strain your heart," I said.

I followed bumper to bumper traffic into the edge of town. Half the restaurants lining the route were Chinese, Thai and Mexican...I did not recognize a single place. It could have been anywhere in America. It was a thought oddly thrilling and disappointing at once.

"A man's finished when he has to pee in a bottle," Forrest said. "It's got to where you can't even piss off your back porch with neighbors so near. Now it's peeing in a bottle."

That was an old complaint of Forrest's. The mountains were getting so thickly settled by retirees and summer people a man couldn't relieve himself off the back porch without being seen.

Forrest's face and arms were white. He hadn't been outside all summer from the look of it. He had the pale cast heart patients have, the gray papery look.

"I can't drink nothing," he said. "Everything I drink just swells up my legs and feet."

His hands had shrunk. He had the biggest, roughest hands of any man I'd ever seen. But the calluses were gone, and the skin was smooth and white.

He took a bite of orange jello and slammed the fork down on the tray. A bit of pineapple or some other fruit swam in the quivering block like a yellow fish.

"My good life is over," he said.

A nurse walked briskly into the room.

"I want you to lie back and rest," she said. "Don't get excited." She made some adjustment with the heart monitor.

"Would you like a tranquilizer?" she said.

"No ma'am," he said.

She patted him on the head. "That's a sweetheart," she said.

When she was gone Forrest reached over on the table beside the bed and handed me an envelope. "What's the story here?" he said.

Inside was a contract from the phone company for an easement across his property.

"It's for a cable," he said. "A big thick cable they shoot light through for telephone calls."

"Where does it go?" I said.

"Right under the old telephone line, or along side of it."

I skimmed through the pages. It was the standard kind of contract, giving the phone company permission to do pretty much anything they wanted to. It was the kind usually offered to country people.

"The man is coming back on Tuesday," Forrest said. "He said I had to sign, or the court would give it to them anyway."

"You can ask them to make some changes in the contract," I said.

"The property is going to waste anyway," Forrest said. "I can't take care of it no more. Wilma don't care, and you're in Atlanta."

"First specify exactly where the right-of-way is," I said. "From this contract they could put the cable under your house if they wanted to. Second, stipulate they have no access to the cable except along the right-of-way. That is, they can't drive across your fields to get there."

"What fields?" Uncle Forrest said. "You mean my weeds."

"Third, make them state explicitly that they have no right to use your property while working on the cable, except for the right of way itself. In other words they can't drive bulldozers over your shrubbery while they are laying the cable."

Uncle Forrest was looking out the window. He was already bored with the talk of the easement.

"Write that down so I can tell the man to put it all in," he said. "Write it the way it's supposed to go."

I wrote the sentences that should be added to the contract on the back of the last page of the document.

"You ain't never coming back," Uncle Forrest said when I handed him the paper.

"I'd like to sometime," I said. "If I could afford it or find a job up here."

"Your Daddy always thought you'd come back," he said. "But I knowed better."

"I'd love to live here," I said.

"Never liked to get your hands dirty," Uncle Forrest said. "Remember when we raised the patch of eggplant together and carried them to the market in my old Studebaker. Nothing feels more like a woman's behind than a big ripe eggplant."

Uncle Forrest got short of breath and lay back on the pillow.

"Are you OK?" I said. His skin looked the color of newsprint.

Two nurses came rushing in, and one placed a stethoscope on his chest. "Just breathe normal," she said. "Just breathe normal."

A fine sweat showed on Uncle Forrest's forehead.

"Lie back," the other nurse said. "We're going to put you back on the IV. You're not getting enough fluid out."

For the first time I noticed his arm already had a needle taped to it. They just plugged in the tube from the bottle above his bed. The other nurse put an oxygen tube in his nose and over his ears.

"We'll have to insert the catheter again," the older nurse said and got another tube and bottles out of the cabinet.

When they were finished with Forrest, he reminded me of Gulliver awaking in Lilliput and tied down by hundreds of bonds. But I was struck most by the resignation Forrest showed. Two years ago he would have pulled out all the tubes and walked out of the hospital to his pickup truck. He had never felt at ease indoors and had been known to walk out of doctors' offices and school commencements if things got crowded.

As they finished with him I looked out the window at the view of Pisgah and the French Broad valley. A red-tailed hawk circled far above the town. It was probably looking for a mouse on a roof or in a backyard.

"Got to run," I said. "I'll stop by and see Jennie on my way."

He nodded. He had never been one for goodbye greetings. I felt guilty for the relief that came over me as I rode the elevator down and walked out past the nurses' station, the gift shop and receptionists. It was indeed like leaving a prison.

I was so happy to be out of the hospital my empty stomach didn't remind me it was past lunch time until I was almost back on the Interstate. The last restaurant before the exit was a Taco Bell. Mexican fast food was not my favorite, but this was my last chance to catch a bite before I returned to the creek valley.

The new fast food places always seemed to sparkle with plastic decorations and shiny rails, compared to the older hamburger joints and drive-ins out on the truck route. The air conditioner was turned up full blast, and it felt like walking into a meat locker. I ordered at one window, paid at another, and picked up my taco, fries and coffee at a third

window. The lunch crowd had thinned out, though there were clusters of teenagers here and there.

There was a man sitting directly across from me who seemed familiar. I was almost certain it was Gilbert Griffith. Gilbert had been my lab partner in eleventh grade chemistry. He wore some kind of brown uniform, like a delivery man or a pest exterminator might wear. I hoped he would recognize me, if it was Gilbert, and we could talk. But the man eating tacos and drinking coffee gave no sign of recognition. Perhaps it was not Gilbert after all.

Holding the tacos over the Styrofoam to keep the filling from getting on my shirt, I ate them as fast as possible.

As I stood up and carried the napkins and cup and Styrofoam to the trash can, I hoped the man in uniform would give some sign of recognition. I walked past him and said "Hi," but he only nodded as he would to a stranger.

By the time I turned off at the exit to the valley it was mid afternoon. I should have asked Forrest if Aunt Jennie or Wilma would be there. They probably would go to the hospital that afternoon. When I drove up into the yard, sure enough Aunt Jennie's car was gone. There was Forrest's old pickup sitting by the woodpile, but it looked as though it hadn't been driven in months. Behind the woodpile stood the oil tank for the furnace they had installed a few years back. The chips around the chopping block had weathered and were mostly covered with weeds. The truck had the buff look of paint that has weathered a long time.

Around the front and by the side door the yard had been mowed. But the backyard was grown up in thistles and briars. The old chicken house and crib were isolated in the flood of weeds without even a path to them or the pasture gate. I knocked on the side door. A chicken scratched in the dirt under the porch. At least Aunt Jennie kept a few hens.

There is a moment when you try to decide if a house is deserted or not. Either someone will come up to the door, and you prepare to greet them, to be cheerful, to have something to say. Or there will prove to be nobody at home, and you can look around at your leisure, thinking your own thoughts. I listened for steps, for voices. A clock was striking inside, the old Smith clock on the mantel, the clock with doors and arches that sounded like it was clearing its throat before it chimed. Nothing else stirred inside. I looked through the glass and saw nothing but a coat stand with a raincoat on it. Forrest's chain saw sat on the back porch in a pool of oil, its teeth rusted a little.

I would not be able to see Aunt Jennie unless I returned to the hospital. Of course I had no way of knowing where she was. She and Wilma could be shopping at the mall in Asheville, or they could have gone to the county fair. But chances were they were at the hospital. There was nothing for me to do but go back to Atlanta.

Just before getting in the car I decided to take a walk out by the spring and over to the field we had always called The New Ground. If the haul road wasn't too grown-up, I would walk over there and back and still get to Atlanta before dark.

There must have been a sleet storm the winter before because the haul road was crossed with leaning and fallen pines. Again and again I had to duck under or walk around wind-thrown trees. By that alone you would know the farmer was sick, I thought, climbing over a broken maple trunk.

The New Ground was grown up as I expected it to be. A few gray cornstalks stood among the old weeds from last year and the new weeds and briars. Broom sedge grew around the margins, and pine seedlings like blue sparks were thriving here and there. In ten years the field would be woods again. But the mountain above was beautiful as it ever had been, in the haze and smokey blue of late summer. The knob still looked like the dome of a woolly mammoth's head.

For the first time I noticed all the grasshoppers and crickets in the weeds around me. They were clicking and chirping like thousands of little time pieces flicking and marking off the seconds. When I took a step they effervesced out of the way, many as the stars overhead, I thought, the stars you don't see in the daytime but know are there shivering on and on in the dark above the blue. I thought that before I started back I might stop by and see if Margaret was home, just to see how she was, to see if she remembered me.

One Medium

Each storefront simulates TV,
Walden Books, The Gap, The Foot Locker,
even the anchors like J.C. Penney and Sears;
the neon yellows and reds and whites
are as bright and compelling as color TV.
Entering the store one enters the tube,
the tube at home, the living room vacuum,
the sixty second commercials that add
years to our lives,
tubes of time, tubes of greed;
the electronic shopper moves from
tube to tube, guided
by the seeing eye of the screen at home,
the vision that sees again at the mall,
revision after revision, store after store,
one medium after all.

—Ronald Smits

Ronald Smits teaches English at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Some of his recent publications and acceptances include ***Hawaii Review***, ***Kansas Quarterly***, *and* ***Three Rivers Poetry Journal***. *He lives in Ford City, Pa.*

The Rust Belt Shrinks, The New South Grows

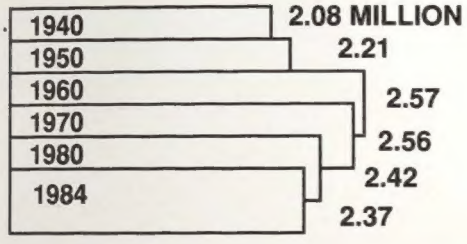
Some Appalachian Metropolitan Statistical Areas

If you take the counties that the U.S. government's Appalachian Regional Commission calls Appalachian—all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states—then the biggest city in the region is Pittsburgh, with a population of 2,284,100 (as of July 1, 1988). Pittsburgh is the only Appalachian city in the United States' top 20 population-wise (it's 19th). In 1980, 54.6 percent of the region's population lived in urban areas. As high as this figure is, it is not as high as the United States as a whole—77 percent are urban dwellers in the nation.

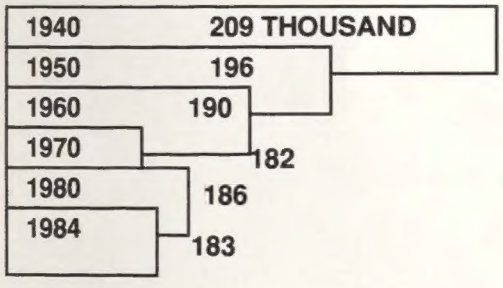
Not surprisingly, urban population in the region has followed national trends over the years. Population has stagnated or shrunk in northern industrial cities of Appalachia and grown dramatically in the Southern portion of the region. For instance, the Tri-Cities of Johnson City, Kingsport and Bristol in East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia, were not counted as a Metropolitan Statistical Area until the 1960 census. But like another East Tennessee city, Knoxville, and like other Southern neighbors, the Tri-Cities have become more and more urbanized since the 1940s. Industrial centers of Wheeling, W.Va., in the northernmost point of West Virginia have, like many Northern industrial cities, suffered economically, and population has decreased.

Rust Belt

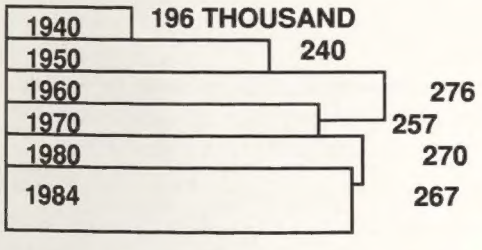
PITTSBURGH - BEAVER VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA



WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA/OHIO

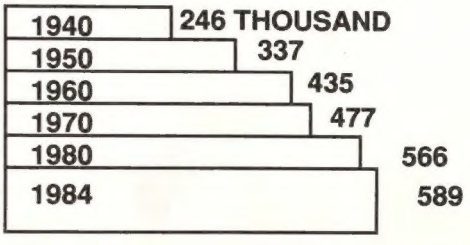


CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

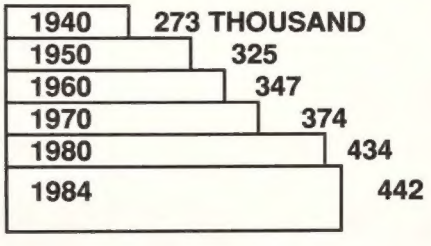


New South

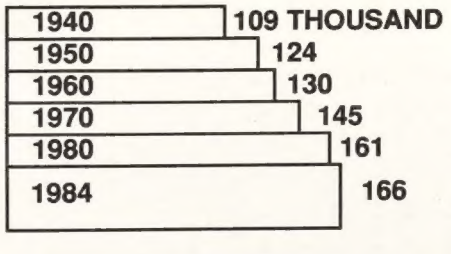
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE



JOHNSON CITY - KINGSPORT - BRISTOL TENNESSEE/VIRGINIA*



ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA



Notes:
Population data for 1940 and 1950 from U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1960; Volume I, Characteristics of the Population; Part I, U. S. Summary, 1964.* Population data for 1960 through 1984 from U. S. Bureau of the Census, *State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, 1986.*

Thanks for information from Jerome Pickard of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

* Johnson City, Kingsport, Bristol Tenn.-Va. were not recognized as an Metropolitan Statistical Area until 1960. The data presented for 1940 and 1950 represent the combined populations of Carter, Hawkins, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington Counties, Tenn., and Scott and Washington Counties, Va., with Bristol, Va.

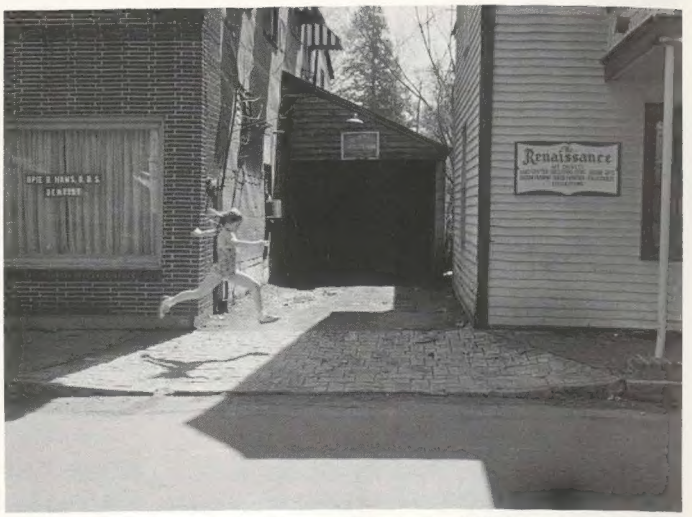
Compiled by Bryan Culp. Computer graphics by Blair White.

Music

This urban issue of *Now and Then* gives me a chance to tell you about Wednesday nights at the Down Home. Down Home is a nationally-known music listening room in downtown Johnson City, Tenn. The Down Home provides the community with an opportunity to see and hear national, international and regional performers. Throughout the Down Home's 14-year history, Wednesday nights have been dedicated to the local picker and performer. Open Hoot is not a contest, there are no prizes or cash money, and there are no winners. It's just an opportunity for performers to get up in front of some people and try out what they're working on.

This urbanized musical setting in East Tennessee has produced some amazing nights with old-time bands, solo guitarists, bluegrass bands, comics, punk bands, theater sketches and rock 'n' roll bands taking their turns on the stage. And each performer has usually encouraged some friends to come down. Seeing the relationship between the performers and the audience members, who are usually a diverse mixture of people, lends an interesting twist to Wednesday nights.

Several performers have used this night as a springboard for building their local following and fine tuning their acts. Brian and the Nightmares is one such band. Brian Relleva, the leader of the band, began trying his hand at composing original songs during this time as well. The song featured in this issue is one of his first songs titled "Jonesboro Woman." (He prefers the old spelling for the town.) Relleva says this song came from a true experience working on a farm in Jonesborough, Tenn. He met a woman who was in her late 50s who had been working since she was 13. He said he was impressed with the woman because she seemed happy despite the fact she had worked hard all her life. Relleva put these words to a straight-ahead Chuck Berry-style rock 'n' roll progression.

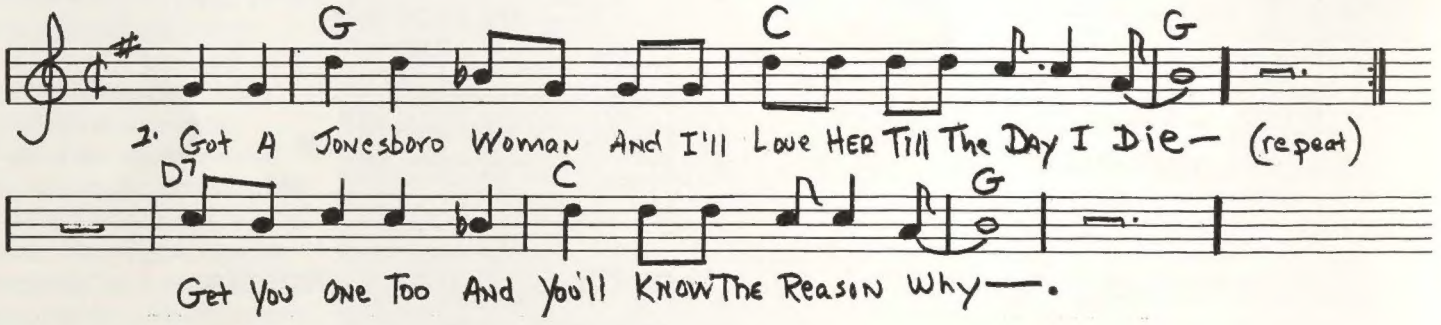


Jonesborough, Tenn. Photo by Michael Smith.

Other members of the Nightmares include Kurt Hagardorn, John Smith, and Tad Dickens. These members also contribute original songs to the Nightmares' repertoire. Brian and The Nightmares came from the rural East Tennessee area of Flag Pond. Their musical influences range from Hank Williams to Jimi Hendrix. The Nightmares have become a popular band who perform excellent rock 'n' roll in cities and towns throughout the South.

—Ed Snodderly

JONESBORO WOMAN by BRIAN RELLEVA



1.
I got a Jonesboro woman been farmin' since she was 13
Her Daddy raised tobacco while her momma cooked and cleaned
She was raised on corn bread and government subsidies

2.
We got a little bitty farm house sits off highway 11-E
Set up a stand to sell corn and bushel beans
We don't make a lot of money but that's OK with her and me

3.
I once was lonely my heart was on leave
Till that Jonesboro woman come and delivered me
How can a woman make me feel so good
Lord I'd pay her back—if I only could.

4.
Got a Jonesboro woman and I'll love her till the day I die
Got a Jonesboro woman and I'll love her till the day I die
Get you one too and you'll know the reason the why.

© 1988 Lizard Songs

Brian and the Nightmares have three recordings available on LP and cassette. For more information write to them at P.O. Box 2031, Johnson City TN 37605.

If you would like to know more about the Down Home, please write to: Down Home, 300 West Main, Johnson City TN 37604.

Ed Snodderly is a singer and songwriter from Johnson City, Tenn. He performs with The Brother Boys and is one of the proprietors of the Down Home.

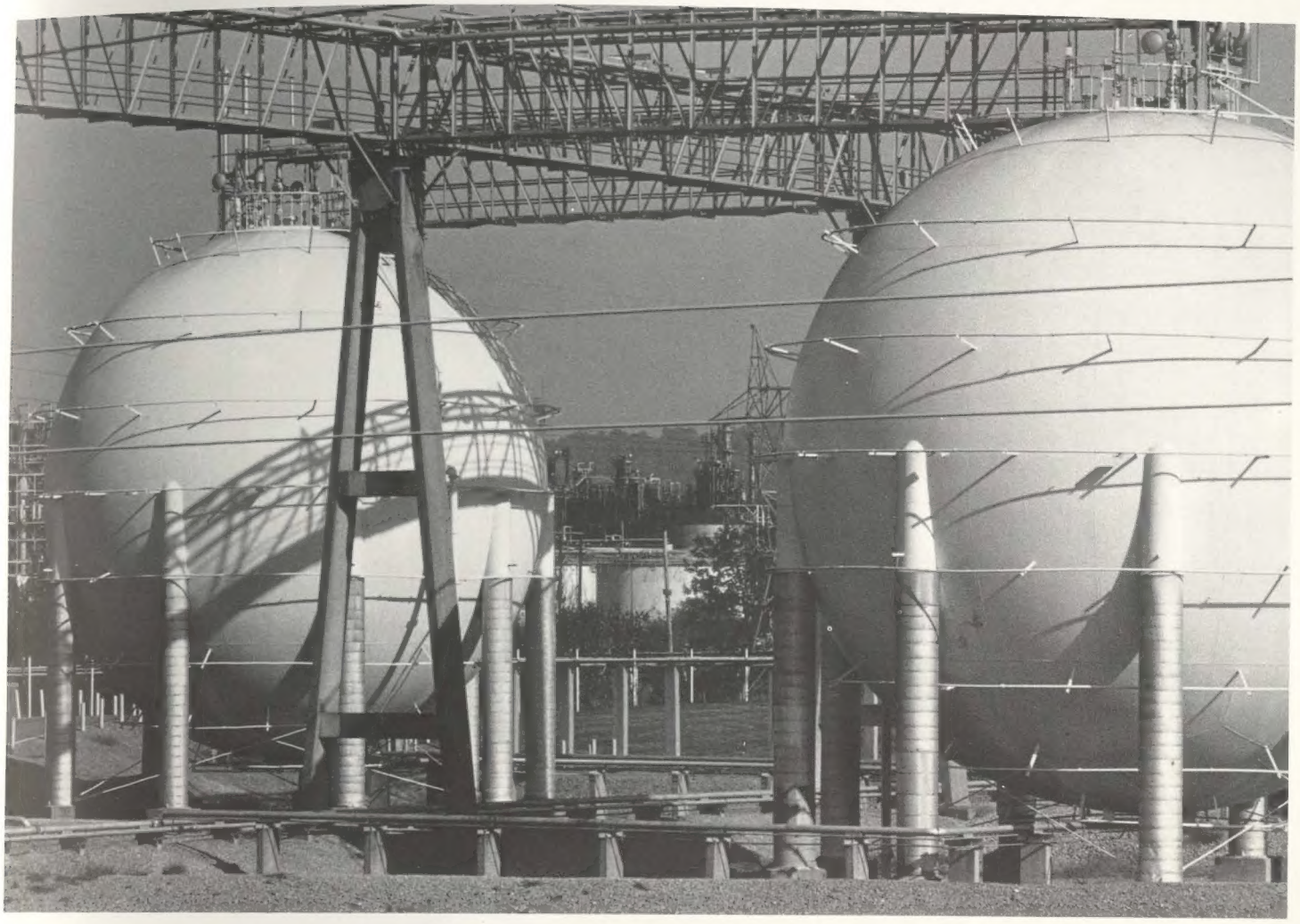


Photo by Vickie Quigg

"I kept working in Dayton, but we weren't getting anywhere. . . We held on for awhile, but the truth was, we'd rather be miserable at home."

—George Ella Lyon
from *Choices, 1989*

Wish you were here

SPECIAL READER SURVEY

What are your favorite tourist attractions in Appalachia? *Now and Then* is preparing a special spring 1991 "Tourism in Appalachia" issue. We'd like to hear about places from the most magnificent to the most tasteless. Please send your suggestions (on picture postcards if possible) before November 1.

Vickie Quigg is from Wise, Va., and now takes pictures and lives in Pittsburgh.

Diamond Cab Company, Johnson City, Tenn. Photo by Michael Smith

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COMING UP

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